THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

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Beginning

Ruggles of Red Gap—By Harry Leon Wilson

Studebaker

LIGHT SIX

FIVE PASSENGER

$1385

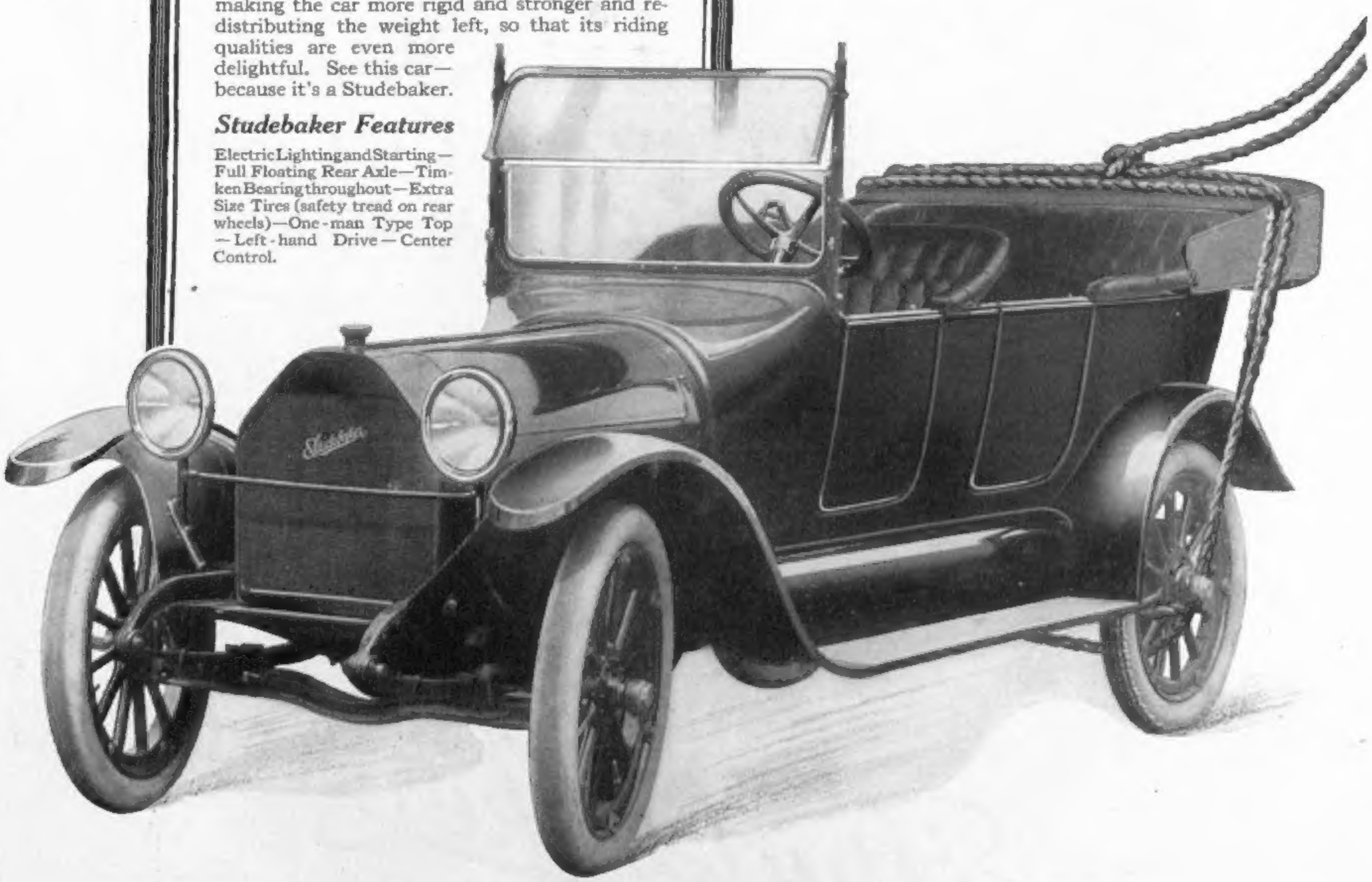
Instinct with dignity, its impressive lines and its rare elegance of finish make the Studebaker Light SIX a car that ranks with any car on the "show" drives of the country where cars are judged by *looks*—and with any car on the open roads where cars are judged by *performance*.

Weighing only 2860 pounds, it is a Light SIX that is LIGHT—easy to drive and yet economical in operation. For Studebaker engineers in this car have succeeded in doing away with hundreds of pounds of useless weight, at the same time making the car more rigid and stronger and redistributing the weight left, so that its riding qualities are even more delightful. See this car—because it's a Studebaker.

Studebaker Features

Electric Lighting and Starting—Full Floating Rear Axle—Timken Bearing throughout—Extra Size Tires (safety tread on rear wheels)—One-man Type Top—Left-hand Drive—Center Control.

Studebaker Roadster, $985
Studebaker FOUR, . $985
Studebaker SIX—
7-passenger, $1450



—the $ 45,000,000 Guarantee that goes with every Studebaker car—

Forget for a minute that name Studebaker!

Forget the pride that any manufacturer must have in such a name that for 63 years has stood for the highest achievements in vehicles of every nature.

Forget the efforts that any manufacturer would make to keep that hard-won name at the very forefront—

And think only of the Forty-Five Millions of Dollars invested in the gigantic plants where Studebaker Cars are built. And then you will see why Studebaker MUST make a good car.

Call it selfishness, if you like. Call it business judgment. Call it what you will—but the fact remains that Forty-Five Millions of Dollars invested in *any* business must be protected no matter what the cost.

And this Forty-Five Millions of Dollars invested in Studebaker plants is your guarantee not only that Studebaker CAN give you full money's worth for every dollar of the price, because the group of Studebaker plants has been made one of the most complete on the face of the earth;

—but also that Studebaker MUST make the BEST car that can be built for the price to protect that vast investment.

And it is for this that Studebaker seeks the highest authorities on automobile designing.

It is for this that Studebaker manufactures Studebaker Cars COMPLETE in Studebaker plants—to make sure that each of the hundreds of parts that go to make a car is made of the materials and in the way that Studebaker wants it made.

It is for this that Studebaker guarantees a Service of the highest type. And it is for this that Studebaker in the years gone by has picked and chosen only the best, the most dependable dealers who could insure the giving of such service. It is, in brief

—because it's a

Studebaker

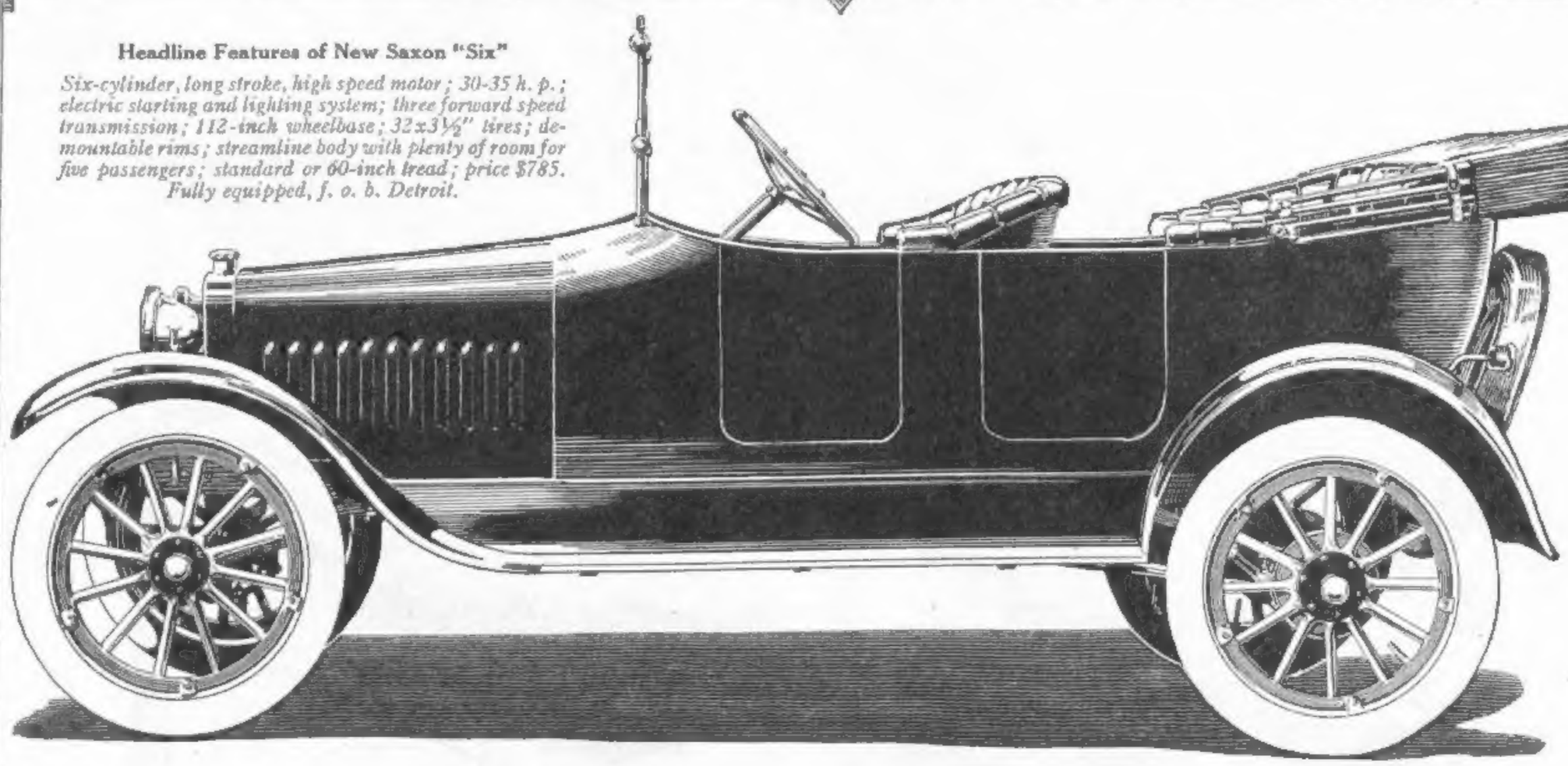
And "—because it's a Studebaker," backed by that $45,000,000 guarantee and all the wealth of experience and resources and ideals of manufacture, you can not in justice to yourself fail to see the Studebaker Car. Go to your local Studebaker dealer. See the Cars—both the FOUR and the SIX—and judge them for yourself. And if you are interested in knowing how good a car can be made when the manufacturer wants to, write for "The Story of Studebaker."

STUDEBAKER—DETROIT

Canadian Factories, Walkerville, Ontario

Headline Features of New Saxon "Six"

Six-cylinder, long stroke, high speed motor; 30-35 h. p.; electric starting and lighting system; three forward speed transmission; 112-inch wheelbase; 32x3½" tires; demountable rims; streamline body with plenty of room for five passengers; standard or 60-inch tread; price $785. Fully equipped, f. o. b. Detroit.



SAXON SIX $785

The Answer to a Nation-Wide Question

The most impressive single feature of this car at the price of $785 is, of course, the six-cylinder motor.

Superiority of a six-cylinder motor for a touring car is generally admitted in the automobile trade—and understood by the automobile-buying public.

Six-cylinder merit does not, therefore, require argument here. It is enough merely to state that practically all leading makers of high and medium priced touring cars have within the past few seasons been converted to belief in the six-cylinder principle and are now building that type exclusively.

The principle of the six-cylinder motor is right. Therefore its progress cannot be stopped. The "Six" provides a superior and generally more satisfactory performance. It is a finer thing to own.

Realizing these facts, the whole nation has been asking: "Why doesn't someone build a good low-priced six-cylinder car?" We are glad to be first to answer this logical question.

Unlooked-For Features

Saxon six-cylinder motor is of the L-head type, with cylinders cast en bloc, and develops 35 horse power on block test. Oiling system of the splash type, with pump circulation.

Wheelbase of the Saxon is 112 inches. No other car selling below $1250 has an equal wheelbase.

Frame is 4½" x 1½" x ⅛" of the best grade 25-point carbon steel, deep channel section.

Front axle is an I-beam forging; the rear axle is three-quarter floating type with full Hyatt bearing equipment throughout.

Transmission is three speeds forward and reverse, on the rear axle.

Springs are of the modern Saxon cantilever type, found elsewhere only on much higher priced cars. They are of vanadium steel and provide unusual riding steadiness and comfort.

Saxon clutch is dry plate, the same design found on many high priced cars, and constructed of the very best materials.

This new Saxon is full five-passenger capacity; only one other car selling under $1250 has equal inside width of the tonneau seat, and none has more. The body is full streamline, very graceful and pleasing to the eye.

Saxon History Repeats Itself

Saxon is the first company to offer a six-cylinder car at a price as low as $785—just as we were the *first* to offer a two-passenger car of real automobile-size specifications at a price below $400.

How can we do it, you ask? There are two chief reasons: First, good designing and good building—"knowing how." Second, big production.

Some of America's most successful automobile engineers designed Saxon cars. In designing Saxons those engineers have profited by all they have learned in many years of automobile progress and by what the industry as a whole has learned.

Saxon cars are modern cars. They embody in every feature what engineers generally concede to be the best principles of automobile design.

It would have been impossible two years ago for anyone to produce the Saxon "Six" at our price. That long ago, however, we saw that some day such an achievement would be possible, and we began working. Our car is not, therefore, an overnight conception hastily thrown together. Our test models have been on the roads many months. We know we are offering a good car—truly fine value.

Because we build high-value cars we get big sales—big volume of production,—and, as a result—down come prices!

Only really good things sell in big quantities; and only by very big quantities do you get goodness and low prices combined.

An Unequaled Record

The good value we gave in our two-passenger car brought us success even beyond our expectations: *The Saxon Company shipped more cars in its first year than any other company in the history of the automobile industry—a record of which we feel justly proud.*

Now we are doubling our output of two-passenger cars, and the price of our "Six" is based on an annual volume of 25,000 cars.

We have made adequate plans to effect such production. Our sources of supply are of the best. Our organization is complete and efficient. We have ample finances. And we are just moving into a big, new factory which will provide plenty of room and facilities for rapid and good production.

Send for "Saxon Days"

We have an interesting magazine, "Saxon Days," that tells complete details of Saxon cars and gives many facts and stories of interest to owners and prospective owners of automobiles. This magazine will answer for you many questions we haven't space to handle here. Yours for the asking. May we not hear from you?

Saxon Motor Co., Detroit

Saxon Roadster, $395. Standard or 60-inch tread; wood or wire wheels optional. Electric lights and starter, $70 extra.

The Saxon "Six" will be shown for the first time at the New York and Chicago Automobile Shows. We invite the fullest inspection and comparison.

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RUGGLES OF RED GAP

By HARRY LEON WILSON

ILLUSTRATED BY F. R. GRUGER

"Believe Me, Mrs. Effie Is Some Wildcat!"

AT SIX-THIRTY in our Paris apartment I had finished the Honorable George, performing those final touches that make the difference between a man well turned out and a man merely dressed. In the main I was not dissatisfied. His dress waistcoats, it is true, no longer permit the inhalation of anything like a full breath and his collars clasp too closely—I have always held that a collar may provide quite ample room for the throat without sacrifice of smartness, if the depth be at least two and one-quarter inches. And it is no secret to either the Honorable George or our intimates that I have never approved his fashion of beard, a reddish, enveloping, brushlike affair never nicely enough trimmed. I prefer, indeed, no beard at all, but he stubbornly refuses to shave, possessing a difficult chin. Still, I repeat, he was not nearly impossible as he now left my hands.

"Dining with the Americans," he remarked as I conveyed the hat, gloves and stick to him in their proper order.

"Yes, sir," I replied. "And might I suggest, sir, that your choice be a grilled undercut or something simple, bearing in mind the undoubted effects of shellfish upon one's complexion?" The hard truth is that after even a very little of lobster the Honorable George has a way of coming out in spots. A single oyster patty, too, will often spot him quite all over.

"What cheek! Decide that for myself," he retorted with a lame effort at dignity that he was unable to sustain. His eyes fell from mine. "Besides, I'm almost quite certain that last time it was the melon. Wretched things—melons!"

Then, as if to divert me, he rather fussily refused the correct evening stick I had chosen for him and seized a knobby bit of thorn wood—suitable only for moor or upland work—and brazenly quite discarded the gloves.

"Feel a silly fool wearing gloves when there's no reason," he exclaimed pettishly.

"Quite so, sir," I replied, freezing instantly.

"Now don't play the juggins," he retorted. "Let me be comfortable. And I don't mind telling you I stand to win a hundred quid this very evening."

"I dare say," I replied. The sum was more than needed, but I had cause to be thus cynical.

"From the American Johnny with the eyebrows," he went on with a quite pathetic enthusiasm. "We're to play their American game of poker—drawing poker as they call it. I've watched them play for near a fortnight. It's beastly simple. One has only to know when to bluff."

"A hundred pounds—yes, sir. And if one loses ——"

He flashed me a look so deucedly queer that it fair chilled me.

"I fancy you'll be more interested than I, if I lose," he remarked in tones of a curious evenness that were somehow rather deadly.

The words seemed pregnant with meaning indeed, but before I could weigh them I heard him noisily descending the stairs. It was only then I recalled having noticed that he had not changed to his varnished boots, having still on his feet the cloggish and battered pair he most favored. It was a trick of his to evade me with them. I did for them each day all that human boot cream could do, but they were things no sensitive gentleman would endure with evening dress. I was glad to reflect that doubtless only Americans would observe them.

So began the final hours of a fourteenth of July in Paris that must ever be memorable. My own birthday—it is also chosen by the French as one on which to celebrate with carnival some one of those regrettable events in their own distressing past.

To begin with, the day was marked first of all by the breezing-in of his Lordship, Earl of Brinstead, brother of the Honorable George, on his way to England from the Engadine. More peppery than usual had his lordship been, his grayish side whiskers in angry upheaval and his inflamed words exploding quite all over the place, so that the Honorable George and I had both perceived it to be no time for admitting our recent financial reverse at the gaming tables of Ostend. On the contrary we had gamely affirmed the last quarter's allowance to be practically untouched—a desperate stand indeed! But there was that in his lordship's manner to urge us to it, though even so he appeared to be not more than half deceived.

"No good greening me," he exploded to both of us. "Tell in a flash: gambling or a woman—typing-girl, milliner, dancing person, what, what! Guilty faces, both of you. Know you too well. My word, what, what!"

Again we stoutly protested while his lordship on the hearthrug rocked in his boots and glared. The Honorable George gamely rattled some loose coin of the baser sort in his pockets and tried in return for a glare of innocence foully aspersed. I dare say he fell short of it. His histrionic gifts are but meager.

"Fools, quite fools, both of you!" exploded his lordship anew. "And, make it worse, no longer young fools. Young and a fool, people make excuses. Say, 'Fool? Yes, but so young!' But old and a fool—not a word to say, what, what! Silly rot at forty." He clutched the side whiskers with frenzied hands. He seemed to comb them to a more bristling rage.

"Dare say you'll both come croppers. Not surprise me. Silly old George, course, course! Hoped better of Ruggles, though. Ruggles different from old George. Got a brain, but can't use it. Have old George wed to a charwoman presently. Hope she'll be a worker. Need to be—support you both, what, what!"

I mean to say he was coming it pretty thick, since he could not have forgotten that each time I had warned him so he could hasten to save his brother from distressing misalliances. I refer to the affair with the typing-girl and to the later entanglement with a Brixton milliner encountered under the portico of a theater in Charing Cross Road. But he was in no mood to concede that I had thus far shown a scrupulous care in these emergencies. Peppery he was indeed.

"Greened me fair, haven't you, about money? Quite so, quite so! Not hear from you then till next quarter. No telegraphing—no begging letters. Shouldn't a bit know what to make of them. Plenty you got to last. Say so yourselves." He laughed villainously here. "Morning!" said he, and was out.

"Old Nevil been annoyed by something," said the Honorable George after a long silence. "Know the old boy too well. Always tell when he's been annoyed."

So we had come to the night of this memorable day and to the Honorable George's departure on his mysterious words about the hundred pounds.

Left alone I began to meditate profoundly. It was the closing of a day I had seen dawn with the keenest misgiving, having had reason to believe it might be fraught with significance if not disaster to myself. The year before a gypsy at Epsom had solemnly warned me that a great change would come into my life on or before my fortieth birthday. To this I might have paid less heed but for its disquieting confirmation on a later day at a psychic parlor in Edgware Road. Proceeding there in company with my eldest brother-in-law, a plate-layer and surfaceman on the Northern—he being uncertain about the Derby winner for that year—I was told by the person for a trifle of two shillings that I was soon to cross water and to meet many strange adventures. True, later events proved her to have been psychically unsound as to the Derby winner, so that my brother-in-law, who was out two pounds ten thereby, threatened to have an action against her; yet her reference to myself had confirmed the words of the gypsy, so it will be plain why I had been anxious the whole of this birthday.

For one thing I had gone on the streets as little as possible, though I should naturally have done that, for the behavior of the French on this Bank Holiday of theirs is

repugnant in the extreme to the sane English point of view. I mean their frivolous public dancing and marked conversational levity. Indeed in their sober moments they have too little of British weight. Their best-dressed men are apparently turned out not by menservants but by *modistes*. I will not say their women are without a gift for wearing gowns, and their *chefs* have unquestionably got at the inner meaning of food, but as a people at large they would never do with us. Even their language is not based on reason. I have had occasion, for example, to acquire their word for bread, which is *pain*. As if that were not wild enough they mispronounce it atrociously. Yet for years these people have been separated from us only by a narrow strip of water!

By keeping close to our rooms, then, I had thought to evade what of evil might have been in store for me on this day. Another evening I might have ventured abroad to a cinema palace, but this was no time for daring, and I took the further precaution of locking our doors. Then indeed I had no misgiving save that inspired by the last words of the Honorable George. In the event of his losing the game of poker I was to be even more concerned than he! Yet how could evil come to me, even should the American do him in the eye rather frightfully? In truth I had not the faintest belief that the Honorable George would win the game. He fancies himself as a card-player, though why he should no one knows. At bridge every hand with him is a no-trumper. I need not say more. Also it occurred to me that the American would be a person not accustomed to losing—there was that about him.

More than once I had deplored this rather Bohemian taste of the Honorable George, which led him to associate with Americans as readily as with persons of his own class; and especially had I regretted his intimacy with the family in question. Several times I had observed them on the occasion of bearing messages from the Honorable George, usually his acceptance of an invitation to dine. Too obviously they were rather a handful. I mean to say they were people who could perhaps matter in their own wilds, but they would never do with us.

Their leader, with whom the Honorable George had consented to game this evening, was a tall, careless-spoken person, with a narrow dark face marked with heavy black brows that were rather tremendous in their effect when he did not smile. Almost at my first meeting him I divined something of the public man in his bearing, a suggestion perhaps of the confirmed orator—a notion in which I was somehow further set by the gesture with which he swept back his carelessly falling forelock. I was not surprised, then, to hear him referred to as the Senator. In some unexplained manner the Honorable George, who is never as reserved in public as I could wish him to be, had chummed up with this person at one of the race tracks and had thereafter been almost quite too pally with him and with the very curious other members of his family—the name being Floud.

The wife might still be called youngish, a bit florid in type, plumpish, with yellow hair, though to this a stain had been applied, leaving it in deficient consonance with her eyebrows; these shading grayish eyes that crackled with determination. Rather on the large side she was, forcible of speech and manner, yet curiously eager, I had at once detected, for the exactly correct thing in dress and deportment.

The remaining member of the family was a male cousin of the so-called Senator, his senior evidently by half a score of years, since I took him to have reached the late fifties. Cousin Egbert he was called, and it was at once apparent to me that he had been most direly subjugated by the woman, whom he addressed with great respect as Mrs. Effie. Rather a seamed and drooping chap he was, with mild whitish-blue eyes like a porcelain doll's, a mournfully drooped gray mustache and a grayish jumble of hair. I early remarked his hunted look in the presence of the woman. Timid and soft-stepping he was beyond measure.

Such were the impressions I had been able to glean of these altogether queer people during the fortnight since the Honorable George had so lawlessly taken them up. Lodged they were in an hotel among the most expensive, situated near what would have been our Trafalgar Square,

"Fools, Quite Fools, Both of You! And, Make it Worse, No Longer Young Fools"

and I later recalled that I had been most interestedly studied by the so-called Mrs. Effie on each of the few occasions I appeared there. I mean to say she would not be above putting me intimate questions concerning my term of service with the Honorable George Augustus Vane-Basingwell, the precise nature of the duties I performed for him, and even the exact sum of my *honorarium*. On the last occasion she had remarked—and too well I recall a strange glitter in her competent eyes—"You are just the man needed by poor Cousin Egbert there—you could make something of him. Look at the way he's tied that cravat!"

The person referred to here shivered noticeably, stroked his chin in a manner enabling him to conceal the cravat and affected nervously to be taken with a sight in the street below. In some embarrassment I withdrew, conscious of a cold speculative scrutiny bent upon me by the woman.

If I have seemed tedious in my recital of the known facts concerning these extraordinary North American natives, it will I am sure be forgiven me in the light of those tragic developments about to ensue.

Meantime let me be pictured as reposing in fancied security from all evil predictions while I awaited the return of the Honorable George. I was only too certain he would come suffering from an acute acid dyspepsia, for I had seen lobster in his shifty eyes as he left me; but beyond this I apprehended nothing poignant and I gave myself up to meditating profoundly upon our situation.

Frankly it was not good. I had done my best to cheer the Honorable George, but since our brief sojourn at Ostend, and despite the almost continuous hospitality of the Americans, he had been having, to put it bluntly, an awful hump. At Ostend, despite my remonstrance, he had staked and lost the major portion of his quarter's allowance in testing a system at the wheel which had been warranted by the person who sold it him in London to break any bank in a day's play. He had meant to pause but briefly at Ostend, for little more than a test of the system, then proceed to Monte Carlo, where his proposed terrific winnings would occasion less alarm to the managers. Yet at Ostend the system developed such grave faults in the first hour of play that we were forced to lay up in Paris to economize. For myself I had entertained doubts of the system from the moment of its purchase, for it seemed awfully certain to me that the vendor would have used it himself instead of parting with it for a couple of quid, he being in plain need of fresh linen and smarter boots, to say nothing of the quite impossible lounge suit he wore the night we met him in a cab shelter near Covent Garden. But the Honorable George had not listened to me. He insisted the chap had made it all enormously clear, that those mathematical Johnnies never valued money for its own sake, and that we should presently be as right as two sparrows in a crate.

Fearfully annoyed I was at the dénouement. For now we were at Paris, rather meanly lodged in a dingy hotel on a narrow street leading from what with us might have been Piccadilly Circus. Our rooms were rather a good height, with a carved cornice and plaster enrichments, but the furnishings were musty and the general air depressing, notwithstanding the effect of a few good mantel ornaments that I have long made it a rule to carry with me.

Then had come the meeting with the Americans. Glad I was to reflect that this had occurred in Paris instead of London. That sort of thing gets about so. Even from Paris I was not a little fearful that news of his mixing with this raffish set might get to the ears of his lordship either at the town house or at Chaynes-Wotten. True, his lordship is not overliberal with his brother, but that is small reason for affronting the pride of a family that attained its earldom in the fourteenth century. Indeed the family had become important quite long before this time, the first Vane-Basingwell having been beheaded by no less a personage than William the Conqueror, as I learned in one of the many hours I have been privileged to browse in the Chaynes-Wotten library.

It need hardly be said that in my long term of service with the Honorable George, beginning almost from the time my mother nursed him, I have endeavored to keep him up to his class, combating a certain laxness that has hampered him. And most stubborn he is and willful. At games he is almost quite a duffer. I once got him to play outside left on a hockey eleven and he excited much comment, some of which was of a favorable nature, but he cares little for hunting or shooting and, though it is scarce a matter to be gossiped of, he loathes cricket. Perhaps I have disclosed enough concerning him. Although the Vane-Basingwells have quite almost always married the right people, the Honorable George was beyond question born queer.

Again, in the matter of marriage he was difficult. His lordship, having married early, but into a family of poor lifes, was now long a widower, and meaning to remain so he had been especially concerned that the Honorable George should contract a proper alliance. Hence our constant worry lest he prove too susceptible out of his class. More than once had he shamefully funked his fences. There was the distressing instance of the Honorable Agatha Cradleigh. Quite all that could be desired of family and dower she was, thirty-two years old, a bit faded though still eager, with the rather immensely high forehead and long, thin, slightly curved Cradleigh nose.

The Honorable George at his lordship's peppery urging had at last consented to a betrothal and our troubles for a time promised to be over, but it came to precisely nothing. I gathered it might have been because she wore beads on her gown and was interested in uplift work, or that she bred canaries—these birds being loathed by the Honorable George with remarkable intensity—though it might equally have been that she still mourned a deceased fiancé of her early girlhood, a curate I believe, whose faded letters she had preserved and would read to the Honorable George at intimate moments, weeping bitterly the while. Whatever may have been his fancied objection—that is the time we disappeared and were not heard of for near a year.

Wondering now I was how we should last until the next quarter's allowance. We always had lasted, but each time it was a different way. The Honorable George at a crisis of this sort invariably spoke of entering trade, and had actually talked of selling motor cars, pointing out to me that

"Wonderful! Now He Looks Like Some One!"

even certain rulers of Europe had frankly entered this trade as agents. It might have proved remunerative had he known anything of motor cars, but I was more than glad he did not, for I have always considered machinery to be unrefined. Much I preferred that he be a company promoter or something of that sort in the city, knowing about bonds and debentures, as many of the best of our families are not above doing. That seemed all he could do with propriety, having failed in examinations for the army and the church and being incurably hostile to politics, which he declared silly rot.

Sharply at midnight I aroused myself from these gloomy thoughts and breathed a long sigh of relief. Both gypsy and psychic expert had failed in their prophecies. With a lightened heart I set about the preparations I knew would be needed against the Honorable George's return. Strong in my conviction that he would not have been able to resist lobster, I made ready his hot foot bath with its solution of brine crystals and put the absorbent fruit lozenges close by, together with his sleeping suit, his bed cap and his knitted night socks. Scarcely was all ready when I heard his step.

He greeted me curtly on entering, swiftly averting his face as I took his stick, hat and topcoat. But I had seen the worst at one glance: the Honorable George was more than spotted—he was splotchy. It was as bad as that.

"Lobster *and* oysters," I made bold to remark, but he affected not to have heard and proceeded rapidly to disrobe. He accepted the foot bath without demur, pulling a blanket well about his shoulders, complaining of the water's temperature and demanding three of the fruit lozenges.

"Not what you think at all," he then said. "It was that cursed Bar-le-Duc jelly. Always puts me this way, and you quite well know it."

"Yes, sir, to be sure," I answered gravely, and had the satisfaction of noting that he looked quite a little foolish. Too well he knew I could not be deceived, and even now I could surmise that the lobster had been supported by sherry. How many times have I not explained to him that sherry has double the tonic vinosity of any other wine and may not be trifled with by the sensitive! But he chose at present to make light of it, almost as if he were chaffing above his knowledge of some calamity.

"Some book Johnny says a chap is either a fool or a physician at forty," he remarked, drawing the blanket more closely about him.

"I should hardly rank you as a Harley Street consultant, sir," I swiftly retorted, which was slanging him enormously, because he had turned forty. I mean to say there was but one thing he could take me as meaning him to be, since at forty I considered him no physician. But at least I had not been too blunt, the touch about the Harley Street consultant being rather neat, I thought, yet not too subtle for him.

He now demanded a pipe of tobacco and for a time smoked in silence. I could see that his mind worked painfully.

"Stiffish lot, those American chaps," he said at last.

"They do so many things one doesn't do," I answered.

"And their brogue is not what one could call top hole, is it now? How often they say 'I guess'! I fancy they must say it a score of times in a half hour."

"I fancy they do, sir," I agreed.

"I fancy that Johnny with the eyebrows will say it even oftener."

"I fancy so, sir. I fancy I've counted it well up to that."

"I fancy you're quite right. And the chap guesses when he awfully well knows too. That's the essential rabbit. To-night he said, 'I guess I've got you beaten to a pulp,' when I fancy he wasn't guessing at all. I mean to say I swear he knew it perfectly."

"You lost the game of drawing poker?" I asked coldly, though I knew he had carried little to lose.

"I lost ——" he began.

I observed he was strangely embarrassed. He strangled over his pipe and began anew.

"I said that to play the game soundly you've only to know when to bluff. Studied it out myself, and jolly well right I was, too, as far as I went. But there's farther to go in the silly game. I hadn't observed that to play it greatly one must also know when one's opponent is bluffing."

"Really, sir?"

"Oh, really; quite important I assure you. More important than one would have believed, watching their silly ways. You fancy a chap's bluffing when he's doing nothing of the sort. I'd enormously have liked to know it before we played. Things would have been so awfully different for us ——" He broke off curiously, paused, then added: "For you."

"Different for me, sir?" His words seemed gruesome to me. They seemed open to some vaguely sinister interpretation. But I kept myself steady.

"We live and learn, sir," I said lightly enough.

"Some of us live and some of us learn too late," he replied, increasingly ominous.

"I take it you failed to win the hundred pounds, sir?"

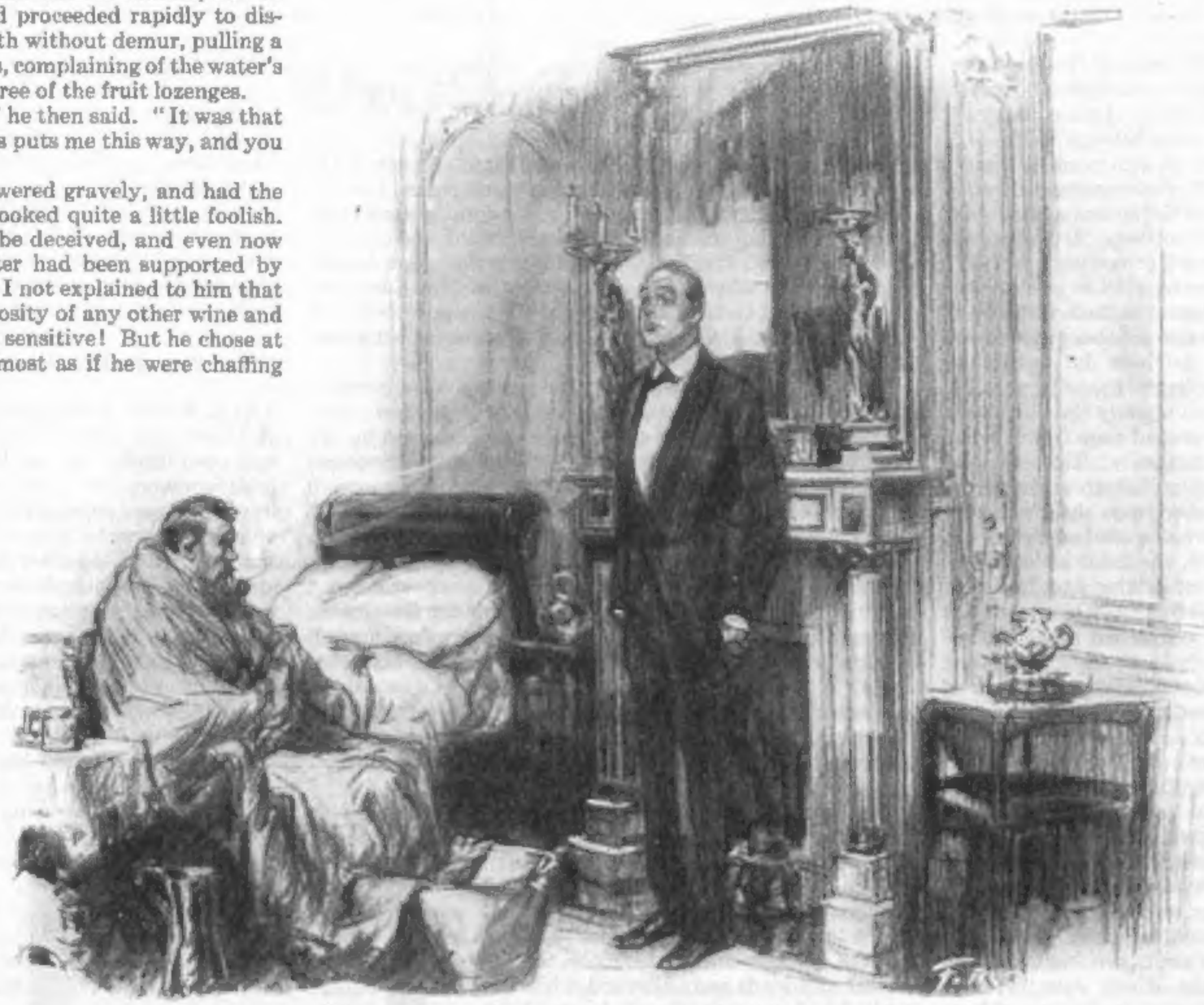
"I have the hundred pounds; I won it—by losing." Again he evaded my eye.

"Played indeed, sir," I said.

"You jolly well won't believe that for long."

Now as he had the hundred pounds I couldn't fancy what the deuce and all he meant by such prattle. I was half afraid he might be having me on, as I have known him do now and again when he fancied he could get me. I fearfully wanted to ask questions. Again I saw the dark, absorbed face of the gypsy as he studied my future.

"Rotten shift life is," now murmured the Honorable George, quite as if he had forgotten me. "If I'd have but put through that Monte Carlo affair I dare say I'd have chucked the whole business—gone to South Africa perhaps and set up a mine or a plantation. Shouldn't have come back. Just cut off, and good-by to this mess. But no capital.



"I Take It You Failed to Win the Hundred Pounds, Sir?"

Can't do things without capital. Where these American Johnnies have the pull of us! Do anything. Nearly do what they jolly well like to. No sense to money. Stuff that runs blind. Look at the silly beggars that have it ——"

On he went quite alarmingly with his tirade. Almost as violent he was as an ugly-headed chap I once heard ranting when I went with my brother-in-law to a meeting of the North Brixton Radical Club. Quite like an anarchist he was. Presently he quieted. After a long pull at his pipe he regarded me with an entire change of manner. Well I knew something was coming—coming swift as a rocketing woodcock. Word for word I put down our incredible speeches:

"You are going out to America, Ruggles."

"Yes, sir; North or South, sir?"

"North, I fancy; somewhere on the West coast—Ohio, Omaha, one of those Indian places."

"Perhaps Indiana or the Yellowstone Valley."

"The chap's a sort of millionaire."

"The chap, sir?"

"Eyebrow chap. Money no end—mines, lumber, domestic animals, that sort of thing."

"Beg pardon, sir! I'm to go ——"

"Chap's wife taken a great fancy to you. Would have you to do for the funny sad beggar. So he's won you. Won you in the game of drawing poker. Another man would have done as well, but the creature was keen for you. Great strength of character—determined sort. Hope you won't think I didn't play soundly, but it's not a forthright game. Think they're bluffing when they aren't. When they are you mayn't think it. So far as hiding one's intentions—a most rottenly immoral game. Low, animal cunning—that sort of thing."

"Do I understand I was the stake, sir?" I controlled myself to say. The heavens seemed bursting about my head.

"Ultimately lost you were by the very trifling margin of superiority that a hand known as a club flush bears over another hand consisting of three of the eights—not quite all of them, you understand, only three—and two quite other meaningless cards."

I could but stammer piteously, I fear. I heard myself make a wretched failure of words that crowded to my lips.

"But it's quite simple, I tell you. I dare say I could show it you in a moment if you've cards in your box."

"Thank you, sir. I'll not trouble you. I'm certain it was simple. But would you mind telling me what exactly the game was played for?"

"Knew you'd not understand at once. My word, it was not too bally simple! If I won I'd a hundred pounds. If I lost I'd to give you up to them but still to receive a hundred pounds. I suspect the Johnny's conscience pricked him. Thought you were worth a hundred pounds and guessed all the time he could do me awfully in the eye with his poker. Quite set they were on having you. Eyebrow chap seemed to think it a jolly good wheeze. She didn't though. Quite off her head at having you for that glum one who does himself so badly."

Dazed I was to be sure, scarce comprehending the calamity that had befallen us.

"Am I to understand, sir, that I am now in the service of the Americans?"

"Stupid! Of course, of course! Explained clearly, haven't I, about the club flush and the three eights? Only three of them, mind you. If the other one had been in my hand I'd have done him. As narrow a squeak as that, but I lost. And you may be certain I lost gamely, as a gentleman should. No laughing matter, but I laughed with them—except the funny sad one. He was worried and made no secret of it. They were good enough to say I took my loss like a dead sport."

More of it followed, but always the same. Ever he came back to the sickening concise point that I was to go out to the American wilderness with these grotesque folk, who had but the most elementary notions of what one does and what one does not do. Always he concluded with his boast that he had taken his loss like a dead sport. He became vexed at last by my painful efforts to understand how precisely the dreadful thing had come about. But neither could I endure more. I fled to my room. He had tried again to impress upon me that three eights are but slightly inferior to the flush of clubs.

I faced my glass. My ordinarily smooth, full face seemed to have shriveled. The marks of my anguish were upon me. Vainly had I locked myself in. The gypsy's warning had borne its evil fruit. Sold I'd been; even as once the poor blackamoors were sold into American bondage. I recalled one of their pathetic folk songs in which the wretches were wont to make light of their lamentable estate; a thing I had often heard sung by a black with a banjo on the pier at Brighton—not a genuine black, only dyed for the moment he was—but I had never lost the plaintive quality of the verses:

Away down South in Michigan,
Where I was so happy and so gay,
'Twas there I mowed the cotton and the cane ——

How poignantly the simple words came back to me! A slave, day after day mowing his owner's cotton and cane, plucking the maize from the savannahs—yet happy and gay! Should I be equal to this spirit? The Honorable George had lost; so I, his pawn, must also submit like a dead sport.

How little I then dreamed what adventures, what adversities, what ignominies—yes, and what triumphs—were to be mine in those back blocks of North America! I saw but the bleak wilderness—a distressing contact with

(Continued on Page 34)

THE RED GLUTTON

VILLE DE SAINT-QUENTIN
N°55344
Délibération du Conseil Municipal du 3 Août 1914
Bon Municipal de
DEUX FRANCS
Remboursable en espèces à vue sur présentation à la Recette Municipale trois mois après la signature de la paix.

Paper Fractional Currency Issued by Municipalities in France

German Troops Marching Through Maubeuge Toward the Front

By IRVIN S. COBB

AS WE came along through the town of Maubeuge we heard singing; and singing was a most rare thing to be hearing in this town. In a country where no one smiles any more who belongs in that country, singing is not a thing which you would naturally expect to hear. So we turned off of our appointed route.

There was a small wine shop at the prow of a triangle of narrow streets. It had been a wine shop. It was now a beer shop. There had been a French proprietor; he had a German partner now. It had been only a few weeks—you could not as yet measure the interval of time in terms of months—since the Germans came and sat themselves down before Maubeuge and blew its defenses flat with their 42-centimeter earthquakes and marched in and took it. It had been only these few weeks; but already the Germanizing brands of the conqueror were seared deep in the galled flanks of this typically French community. The town-hall clock was made to tick German time, which varies by an even hour from French time. Tacked upon the door of the little café where we ate our meals was a card setting forth, with painful German particularity, the tariff which might properly be charged for food and for lodging and drink and what not; and it was done in German-Gothic script, all very angular and precise; and it was signed by His Excellency, the German commandant; and its prices were predicated on German logic and the estimated depth of a German wallet. You might read a newspaper printed in German characters, if so minded; but none printed in French, whether so minded or not.

So when we entered in at the door of the little French wine shop where the three streets met, to find out who within had heart of grace to sing O Strassburg, O Strassburg, so lustily, lo and behold, it had been magically transformed into a German beer shop. It was, as we presently learned, the only beer shop in all of Maubeuge, and the reason for that was this: No sooner had the Germans cleared and opened the roads back across Belgium to their own frontiers than an enterprising tradesman of the Rhein country, who somehow had escaped military service, loaded many kegs of good German beer upon trucks and brought his precious cargoes overland a hundred miles and more southward. Certainly he could not have moved the lager caravan without the consent and aid of the Berlin war office. For all I know to the contrary he may have been financed in that competent quarter. That same morning I had seen a field weather station, mounted on an automobile, standing in front of our lodging place just off the square. It was going to the front to make and compile meteorological reports. A general staff that provided weather offices on wheels and printing offices on wheels—this last for the setting up and striking off of small proclamations and orders—might very well have bethought itself that the soldier in the field would be all the fitter for the job before him if stayed with the familiar malts of the *Vaterland*. Believe me, I wouldn't put it past them.

Herr Hauptmann Sets Them Up

ANYWAY, having safely reached Maubeuge, the far-seeing Rheinishman had effected a working understanding with a native publican, which was probably a good thing for both, seeing that one had a stock of goods and a ready-made trade but no place to set up business, and that the other owned a shop, but had lost his trade and his stock-in-trade likewise. These two, the little, affable German and the tall, grave Frenchman, stood now behind their counter drawing off mugs of Pilsener as fast as their four hands could move. Their patrons, their most vocal and boisterous patrons, were a company of musketeers who had marched in from the north that afternoon. As a rule the new levies went down into France on troop trains, but this company was part of a draft which for some reason came afoot. Without exception they were young men, husky and hearty and filled with a beefish joviality at having found a place where they could ease their feet, and rest their legs, and slake their week-old thirst upon their own soothing brews. Being German they expressed their gratefulness in song.

We had difficulty getting into the place, so closely was it filled. Men sat in the window ledges, and in the few chairs that were available, and even in the fireplace, and on the ends of the bar, clunking their heels against the wooden baseboards. The others stood in such close order they could hardly clear their elbows to lift their glasses. The air was choky with a blended smell derived from dust and worn boot leather and spilt essences of hops and healthy, unwashed, sweaty bodies. On a chair in a corner stood a tall, tired and happy youth who beat time for the singing with an empty mug and between beats nourished himself on drafts from a filled mug which he held in his other hand. With us was a German officer. He was a captain of reserves and a person of considerable wealth. He shoved his way to the bar and laid down upon its sloppy surface two gold coins and said something to a petty officer who was directing the distribution of the refreshments.

The "noncom" hammered for silence and, when he got it, announced that the Herr Hauptmann had donated twenty marks' worth of beer, all present being invited to coöperate in drinking it up, which they did, but first gave three cheers for the captain and three more for his American friends and afterward, while the replenished mugs radiated in crockery waves from the bar to the back walls, sang for us a song which, so far as the air was concerned, sounded amazingly like unto Every Little Movement Has a Meaning All its Own. Their weariness was all fallen away from them; they were like schoolboys on a frolic. Indeed, I think a good many of them were schoolboys.

As we came out a private who stood in the doorway spoke to us in fair English. He had never been in America, but he had a brother living in East Saint Louis and he wanted to know if any of us knew his brother. This was a common experience with us. Every third German soldier we met had a brother or a sister or somebody in America. This soldier could not have been more than eighteen years; the down on his cheeks was like corn silk. He told us he and his comrades were very glad to be going forward where there would be fighting. They had had no luck yet. There had been no fighting where they had been. I remembered afterward that "luck" was the word he used.

We went back to the main street and for a distance the roar of their volleying chorus followed us. Men and women stood at the doors of the houses along the way. They were silent and idle. Idleness and silence seemed always to have fallen as grim legacies upon the civilian populace of these captured towns; but the look upon their faces as they listened to the soldiers' voices was not hard to read. Their town was racked with cannonballs where it was not scarified with fire; there was sorrow and the abundant cause for sorrow in every house; commerce was dead and credit was killed; and round the next turning their enemy sang his drinking song. I judge that the thrifty Frenchman who went partner with the German stranger in the beer traffic lost popularity that day among his fellow townsmen.

The Great Vauban's Useless Citadel

WE WERE bound for the railway station, which the Germans already had rechristened *Bahnhof*. Word had been brought to us that trains of wounded men and prisoners were due in the course of the afternoon from the front, and more especially from the right wing; and in this prospect we scented a story to be written. To reach the station we crossed the river Sambre, over a damaged bridge, and passed beneath the arched passageway of the citadel which the great Vauban built for the still greater Louis XIV, thinking, no doubt, when he built it, that it would always be potent to keep out any foe, however strong. Next to its stupid massiveness what most impressed us this day was its utter uselessness as a protection. The station stood just beyond the walls, with a park at one side of it, but the park had become a timber deadfall. At the approach of the enemy hundreds of splendid trees had been felled to clear the way for gunfire from the inner defenses in the event that the Germans got by the outer circle of fortresses. After the Germans took the forts, though, the town surrendered, so all this destruction had been futile. There were acres of ragged stumps and, between the stumps, jungles of overlapping trunks and interlacing boughs from which the dead and dying leaves shook off in showers. One of our party, who knew something of forestry, estimated that these trees were about forty years old.

"I suppose," he added speculatively, "that when this war ends these people will replant their trees. Then in another forty years or so another war will come and they will chop them all down again. On the whole I'm rather glad I don't live on this continent."

The trains which were expected had not begun to arrive yet, so with two companions I sat on a bench at the back of the station, waiting. Facing us was a line of houses. One, the corner house, was a big black char. It had caught fire during the shelling and burned quite down.

Tag Which is Tied to the Arm or Breast of Every Wounded German Soldier as Soon as Field Surgeons Reach Him—Blanks to be Filled in Giving His Name, Rank, Regiment, Place Where Wounded, Nature of Injury and Nature of Treatment Applied. If Both Red-Edged Perforations are Left on the Card He is Too Seriously Wounded to be Moved From the Field Hospital; if One Red Edge is Left He Can be Transported to the Base; if Both are Removed He Can March to the Rear Without Assistance

Its neighbors were intact, except for shattered chimneys and smashed doors and riddled windows. The concussion of big gunfire had shivered every window in this quarter of town. There being no sufficient stock of glass with which to replace the broken panes, and no way of bringing in fresh supplies, the owners of the damaged buildings had patched the holes with bits of planking filched from more complete ruins near by. Of course there were other reasons, too, if one stopped to sum them up: Few would have the money to buy fresh glass, even if there was any fresh glass to buy, and the local glaziers—such of them as survived—would be serving the colors. All France had gone to war and at this time of writing had not come back, except in dribbling streams of wounded and prisoners.

These ragged boards, sparingly nailed across the window sockets, gave the house the air of wearing masks and of squinting at us through narrow eye slits. The railroad station was windowless, too, like all the other buildings round about, but nobody had closed the openings here, and it gaped emptily in fifty places, and the raw, gusty winds of a North European fall searched through it.

In this immediate neighborhood few of the citizens were to be seen. Even those houses which still were humanly habitable appeared to be untenanted; only soldiers were about, and not so very many of them. A hundred yards up the tracks, on a siding, a squad of men with a derrick and crane were hoisting captured French field guns upon flat cars to be taken to Berlin and exhibited as spoils of conquest for the benefit of the stay-at-homes. A row of these cannons perhaps fifty in all, were ranked alongside awaiting loading and transportation. Except for the agonized whine of the tackle-blocks and the buzzing of the flies the place where we sat was pretty quiet. There were a million flies, and there seemed to be a billion. You wouldn't have thought, unless you had been there to see for yourself, that there were so many flies in the world. By the time this is printed the cold weather will have cured Europe of its fly plague, but during the first three months I know that the track of war was absolutely sown with these vermin. Even after a night of hard frost they would be as thick as ever at midday—as thick and as clinging and as nasty. Go into any close, ill-aired place and no matter what else you might smell, you smelled flies too.

The Democracy of the Hospital

AS I SIT and look back on what I myself have seen of it, this war seems to me to have been not so much a sight as a stench. Everything which makes for human happiness and human usefulness it has destroyed. What it has bred, along with misery and pain and fatted burying grounds, is a vast and loathsome stench and a universe of flies.

The smells and the flies; well, they were here in this railroad station in sickening profusion. I call it a railroad station, although it had lost its functions as such weeks before. The only trains which ran now were run by the Germans for strictly German purposes, and so the station had become a victualing point for troops going south to the fighting and a way hospital for sick and wounded coming back from the fighting.

What, in better days than these, had been the lunch room was a place for the redressing of hurts. Its high counters, which once held sandwiches and tarts and wine bottles, were piled with snowdrifts of medicated cotton and rolls of

Correspondents at German Field Hospital at Chimay, Belgium

lint and buckets of antiseptic washes and drug vials. The ticket booth was an improvised pharmacy. Spare medical supplies filled the room where formerly fussy customs officers examined the luggage of travelers coming out of Belgium into France. Just beyond the platform a wooden booth, with no front to it, had been knocked together out of rough planking, and here relays of cooks, with greasy aprons over their soiled gray uniforms, made vast caldrons of stews—always stews—and brewed so-called coffee by the gallon against the coming of those who would need it. The stuff was sure to be needed, all of it and more too. So they cooked and cooked unceasingly and never stopped to wipe a pan or clean a spoon.

At our backs was the waiting room for first-class passengers, but no passengers of any class came to it any more, and so by common consent it was a sort of rest room for the Red Cross men, who mostly were Germans, but with a few captured Frenchmen among them, still wearing their French uniforms. There were three or four French military surgeons—prisoners, to be sure, but going and coming pretty much as they pleased. The tacit arrangement was that the Germans should succor Germans and that the Frenchmen should minister to their own countrymen among the prisoners going north, but in a time of stress—and that meant every time a train came in from the south or west—both nationalities mingled together and served, without regard for the color of the coat worn by those whom they served.

Probably from the day it was put up this station had never been really and entirely clean. Judged by American standards Continental railway stations are rarely ever clean, even when conditions are normal. Now that conditions were anything but normal, this Maubeuge station was incredibly and incurably filthy. No doubt the German nursing sisters who were brought here tried at first, with their German love for orderliness, to keep the interior reasonably tidy; but they had been swamped by more important tasks. For two weeks now the wounded had been passing through by the thousands and the tens of thousands daily. So between trains the women dropped into chairs or down upon cots and took their rest in snatches. But their fingers didn't rest. Always their hands were busy with the making of bandages and the fluffing of lint.

By bits I learned something about three of the women who served on the so-called day shift, which meant that they worked from early morning until long after midnight. One was a titled woman who had volunteered for this duty. She was beyond middle age, plainly in poor health herself and everlastingly on the verge of collapse from weakness and exhaustion. Her will kept her on her feet. The second was a professional nurse from one of the university towns—from Bonn, I think. She called herself Sister Bartholomew, for the German nurses who go to war take other names than their own, just as nuns do. She was a beautiful woman, tall and strong and round-faced, with big, fine gray eyes. Her energy had no limits. She ran rather than walked. She had a smile for every maimed man who was brought to her, but when the man had been treated, and had limped away or had been carried away, I saw her often wringing her hands and sobbing over the utter horror of it all. Then another sufferer would appear and she would wipe the tears off her cheeks and turn to again. The third—so an assistant surgeon confided to us—was the mistress of an officer at the front, a prostitute of the Berlin sidewalks, who enrolled for hospital work when her lover went to the front. She was a tall, dark, handsome girl, who looked to be more Spaniard than German, and she was graceful and lithe even in the exceedingly shapeless costume of blue print that she wore. She was less deft than either of her associates but very willing and eager. As between the three—the noblewoman, the working woman and the woman of the street—the medical officials in charge made no distinction whatsoever. Why should they? In this sisterhood of mercy they all three stood upon the same common ground. I never knew that slop jars were noble things until I saw women in these military lazarets bearing them in their arms.

Augean Stables Without a Hercules

LACKING women to do it, the head surgeon had intrusted the task of clearing away the dirt to certain men and a sorry job they made of it. For accumulated nastiness that waiting room was an Augean stable and the two soldiers who dawdled about in it with brooms lacked woefully in the qualities of Hercules. Putting a broom in a man's hands is the best argument in favor of woman's suffrage that I know of, anyhow. A third man who helped at chores in the transformed lunch room had gathered up and piled together in a heap upon the ground near us a bushel or so of used bandages—grim reminders left behind after the last train went by—and then he had touched a match to the heap in an effort to get rid of it by fire. By reason of what was upon them the clothes burned slowly, sending up a smudge of acrid smoke to mingle with smells of carbolic acid and iodoform, and the scent of boiling food, and of things infinitely less pleasant than these.

Presently a train rolled in and we crossed through the building to the trackside to watch what would follow. Already we had seen a sufficiency of such trains; we knew before it came what it would be like. In front the dumpy locomotive, with a soldier engineer in the cab; then two

(Continued on Page 26)

A Street Corner in Maubeuge. Gateway of the Citadel in the Background. Correspondents' Car in the Foreground

What One 42-Centimeter Shell Did in the Underground Barracks of a Fort Near Maubeuge—Wrecks of Officers' War Beds are Still Hanging on the Bare Walls

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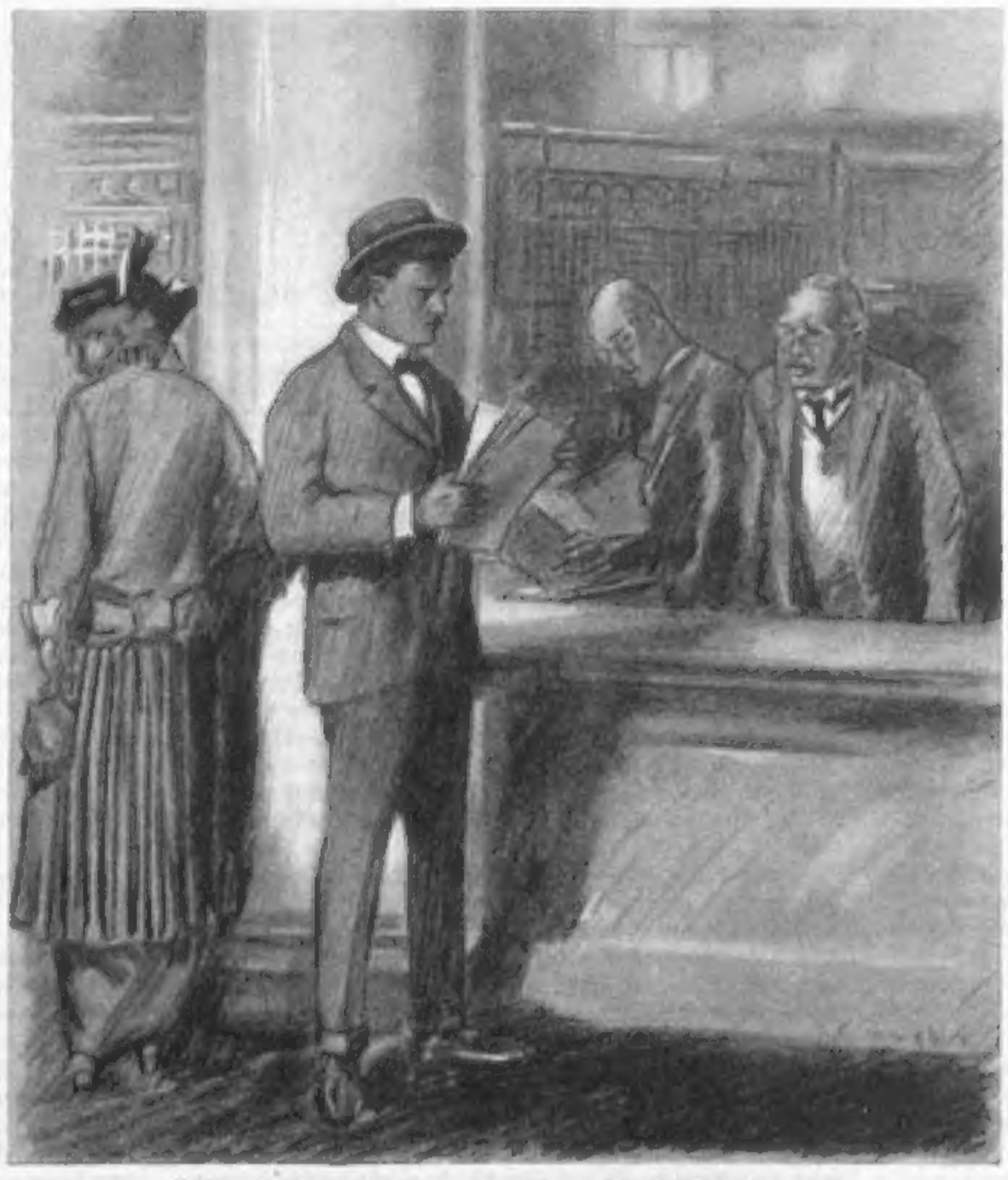
By Frank Goewey Jones

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE WRIGHT



"I Stood There and Went Over Every Line of the Contract"

DAY strode into his partner's office and dropped his valise.

"Hello, Will!" he greeted.

Conroy bounced from his desk to shake hands.

"Back already?" He peered up at the younger man's face. "Didn't Wharton sign, Jim?"

"Yes." Day slumped into a chair and stretched his long legs. "Whew, but I'm tired! Couldn't sleep on the train." He scowled reflectively. "Yes, he signed; that's what worries me. I lay awake all night puzzling over it. He was too willing."

Relief ironed out the wrinkles of anxiety on the round face of the senior partner and left the smooth, lustrous surface of complacence. Conroy sat down. He hitched his creased trousers loose from his plump knees, then dug into the breast pocket of his natty brown cutaway and proffered his cigar case.

"You need a good smoke, Jim," he prescribed.

Day indifferently reached for a cigar, bit off the end and scratched a match. Within three seconds he was belching smoke like a locomotive.

Conroy made a votary's punctilious preparations for a sacrament. He delicately extracted from the leather sheath a plump perfecto which closely resembled himself in shape and sleekness. He held it under his sensitive nose and judged its aroma, then snipped its tip with a gold cutter pendent from his watch chain. Next he struck a wax match, waited until the flame had burned away from the knob of charred phosphorus, set the cigar carefully between his white teeth and held the taper to the end as if he were a high priest starting an altar fire. The smoke of the oblation to contentment curled from his pursed lips like incense.

"So you're worried, eh? Think they've got something cooked up for us?" Conroy flourished his cigar aloft and wafted a scroll of smoke in the air like a professor of penmanship demonstrating curlicues. "All your imagination, my boy! Wharton saw there wasn't anything for him to do but take his medicine."

Day tilted his head and tugged quizzically at his cropped mustache.

"Did you ever see a man swallow a mouthful of powdered quinine?" he drawled.

Conroy mistook the sarcasm for mere drollery. He grinned his appreciation and leaned forward, all eagerness to hear the amusing details of his partner's adventures in New York.

"Well," Day continued with dry deliberation, "Wharton did not look that way. He didn't make a wry face; he smacked his lips. I tried to jolly myself into believing I was the doctor and that I just had forced a bitter dose down his throat, but"—he stared reminiscently into a cloud of smoke—"I felt like a mouse. Wharton actually purred when we signed the contract."

"Did he make you change anything or insert some new clauses?" Conroy guessed anxiously.

"Never suggested the revision of a line." Day leaned far back in his chair and shut his eyes. Half a dozen puffs of smoke popped in rapid succession from his lips.

"I wish I could see his game."

"He hasn't any," boomed the senior partner's positive opinion. Conroy straightened his rumpled white vest with a tug at the bottom and patted his paunch comfortably. "It simply is good business—sensible, money-saving business—for the Consolidated Electric Company to buy Conroy & Day controllers instead of fighting an expensive lawsuit. Undoubtedly their attorneys have told them that any compression-type machine infringes on our rights. So they license us to use their special circuits, we build the apparatus under our patents but according to their designs and specifications, and we agree not to sell that particular style of solenoid controller to anybody else. They are fully protected on their circuits, and we are just as safe about our patents. It's plain business on both sides."

"You're right about one part anyway," Day conceded with a grim smile: "The Consolidated is fully protected. You'd be justified in borrowing an orphan's last dollar to put up on that. But don't you bet a red cent that we're so cussed safe we don't need a whole lot of burglary insurance. Wharton isn't in the habit of making fair contracts with little one-horse concerns like us."

This rumpled Conroy's gloss, but the junior partner proceeded ruthlessly:

"Well, that's the way you'd feel, too, if you just had come from that enormous plant down in New York. You know the history of the Consolidated Electric Company as well as I do. You understand why it maintains the biggest legal department in the business. Whenever it has gone hunting for a small competitor or a poor inventor the other fellow always got clawed through a knot hole in the end. Now why should the cat turn angel to Conroy & Day? I tell you, Will, Wharton's playing with us. We're just mice."

"Have it your own way," Conroy assented cheerily. "But plenty of mice grow fat from drinking old Tom's milk while he's asleep. For instance, look at the manufacturers that are getting rich making accessories for automobiles. I suppose Wharton would pounce on us if we gave him a good chance. That'd be only business. We've got to be careful. But we want that milk, don't we?"

"Y-e-s," Day replied with the slowness of deep reflection. "We—certainly—want—that—milk. It's—almost—a—third—cream." He took a paper from his pocket and unfolded it. "Here's the first requisition under the contract. I figured it up on the train; we ought to make thirty-two hundred and eighteen dollars on this one job."

Conroy snatched the order greedily. His eyes gloated over the brief paragraph of typewriting on the printed form.

"Straight as a string, by George!" he chortled. "A few more of these and we can buy automobiles, Jim!"

"Don't count your punctures until they're patched," Day paraphrased.

He remained rooted in his distrust of the Consolidated Electric Company. A dozen times, in the course of the little firm's dealings with its giant customer, intuition warned him of danger in peculiarly worded specifications and equivocal requisitions submitted. He scrutinized through the microscope of suspicion every word of typewriting that came into the office from the headquarters of the trust. Whenever the junior partner mailed the firm's acceptance of an order he incorporated into his letter in clear language his version of all the obscure phrases in the tender.

Invariably and with uniform readiness the purchasing department of the Consolidated Electric Company confirmed Day's interpretation of ambiguous points. And not once was complaint made that any of the apparatus shipped was unsatisfactory or inefficient. Day had expected finical faultfinding; compliments came instead.

He had anticipated, too, a severe strain on the firm's meager capital and credit. The labor and materials that entered into the manufacture of the intricate solenoid machines were very expensive, and several months were required to fill an order in the cramped factory. Day believed that the Consolidated Electric Company on various trumped-up pretexts would evade and delay payments after shipments had been made, for the purpose of financially embarrassing the firm.

At the outset, therefore, he had insisted to his partner that no large orders, however tempting, should be accepted for at least a year. Conroy had grumbled but agreed. Day's precaution proved needless. The firm received no big requisitions for controllers. The Consolidated Electric Company appeared to be testing the new apparatus in trial installations. The partners learned that the electrical engineers of the trust were carefully observing the performances of all the machines in service. But no criticisms were reported to the manufacturers. Moreover, every bill rendered by Conroy & Day not only was undisputed, but was discounted promptly.

A more satisfactory business relation could hardly have been wished.

Still the junior partner, usually an optimist, never was entirely free from the disquiet he had felt when the contract was signed. But when three or four checks had been received in due course from New York, Conroy became buoyantly confident that he and his business associate had set their feet in the path toward riches. He took delight in twitting Day on his bad judgment about Wharton's good faith.

"Here's that Consolidated voucher for thirty-eight hundred and fifty dollars!" he chuckled one morning when the contract was almost a year old. He referred to a memorandum on his desk, then made a check mark on it. "That's twenty-two in a row without a single hitch."

Day felt no enthusiasm, though he had to concede that his persistent suspicions of the big customer had not been justified by the events of the past twelve months.

"Maybe I was wrong," he slowly made his first admission of doubt. "According to the newspapers some of the trusts actually have had consciences scared into them by the Government. Perhaps the Consolidated does intend to be square with us. But I can't get over feeling worried about our close association with such an enormous concern. I never forget that we're mice and that one swipe of the cat's paw would crush us.

"I like to make money as well as the next man and I expect to take sensible risks. Every once in a while, though, I remember that nobody ever signed a fair patent contract with Wharton and lived to bank the profits he figured on. I admit everything seems all right, but I'll bet there are flowers and fountains in the front yard of hell. You can't tell anything by appearances. Every step I take in this business with the Consolidated I feel as if I were walking over dynamite. If we ship those people goods for ten years, I'll earn every dollar of my share of the returns in the blood I'll sweat."

Conroy of late had taken to smoking even choicer cigars than had previously been his wont. He had blossomed forth only that morning in an expensive business suit fitted perfectly to his globular figure by the most fashionable tailor in the city of Huron. His vision recently had extended his horizon far beyond the environs of Lakeport. He laughed now at his partner's groundless fears.

"We're out of the woods already," he declared. "The controller business we have done so far has paid the experimental and patent expenses. Pretty soon our dies and tools will be velvet. Yet we've had only a few little sample orders. Not a bug has developed in the machines and we haven't heard a kick from a user. The Consolidated doesn't buy fast enough to suit me—that's all. They ought to be convinced by this time that the stuff is all right. I hope they decide to use our apparatus in their own Pittsburgh

extension. That would mean big money for us." He paused and frowned. "I've got a hunch they're going to offer us that job. I suppose, though, you'd think it wasn't safe to tackle it?"

The question was caustic with satire. Conroy recently had been showing impatience at his obstinate partner's pessimism.

The strain of many months of bickering with his business associate had stretched thin the skin of good humor that covered the younger man's self-control. Conroy's innuendo bit through, and the raw nerves smarted.

"Now look here, Will," Day remonstrated testily, "I want you to cut out that kind of talk! I'm no kill-joy. I haven't held back on this thing from cussedness; I've only been prudent. I agree right now to take any chances you say, provided we both keep our eyes wide open. And if we get clawed I shan't blame you. But don't let me hear you holler, either!"

He flung out of the office and into the factory. Whenever Day was angry or disgusted, or just plain blue, it soothed and heartened him to see pulleys whirl, to hear belts whiz and flap, to smell machine oil and to feel the pulse of the big engine beating through shafting. Half an hour after he left his partner he was thoroughly ashamed of his display of temper. He turned back in contrition to the office. In his hand he carried as a peace offering some freshly punched jam nuts, perfect products of a new multiple die that just had been tested on the big press. He would slap Conroy on the back, and they would grin happily together over the saving of six cents on every controller that the improved method of making jam nuts insured.

As Day walked briskly into the general office from the shipping department, Conroy burst out of the sanctum. Across the room he beckoned excitedly to his partner. The face of the older man was beaming; but beneath the radiance tense lines made it appear almost haggard too. Conroy looked as if he were afraid to reach out his hand for something that dazzled and fascinated him, lest it prove to be a live coal instead of the flashing jewel it seemed. Day on the *qui vive* leaped across the general office and followed his partner into the sanctum.

Conroy dropped weakly into the first chair. He panted as if he had collapsed after a hard run. For a moment he was speechless. He pointed a trembling finger at the table.

Day sprang forward with tigerish ferocity. He had recognized at sight the dark-brown document envelope on the blotter and beside it the light-green cover sheet of a Consolidated Electric Company specification. Before he snatched up the folded papers he guessed their contents. His savage eyes tore over them as if he ripped off the words with claws. He tossed aside the specification like a bone stripped bare and crouched to defy his partner.

"We mustn't take it!" he roared.

Conroy quivered and flinched. Then all at once he went crazy with rage at the threatened despoliation. He bounced from his chair to the table—a pug dog gone mad. He clutched the papers on the blotter desperately, as if afraid the other man would try to wrest them away. His lips curled back from his teeth in a challenging snarl.

"We will take it!" he snapped viciously. "I'm not a coward, if you are!"

Day's right arm stiffened and crooked. His long fingers gnarled into a white-knuckled fist. Then they relaxed. This half-insane man who faced him in such fierce defiance was not only his partner but his lifelong friend. Day smiled, albeit a little bitterly.

"You didn't mean that, Will." The low voice shook. "I promised I'd take chances with you if we both keep our eyes open. Let's sit down and look that thing over. If it's all right we'll tackle it together." He held out his hand.

Conroy did not accept it for a few seconds. He glared suspiciously at his business associate. But Day's blue, unswerving eyes never had lied to him; he grabbed the younger man's fingers and they gripped back hard. He dropped the papers on the table.

"I'll leave it to you, Jim," Conroy made gruff amends to his friend.

His round face squared as he clenched his jaws. It was not easy for the senior partner to admit that he had been wrong.

As dispassionately as though they were starting a discussion of shop routine the two men took chairs side by side at the table. They spread out the specification for the rheostat equipment of the Consolidated Electric Company's factory in Pittsburgh. The formal requisition that accompanied it included over eighty thousand dollars' worth of controllers. Day's pencil slowly moved from word to word. Occasionally it made a brief pause. Twice the partners debated a minor point and the junior took notes on a memorandum pad. At the end of twenty minutes they leaned back and looked at each other. Conroy's face was eagerly anxious. Day appeared very grave. He spoke first:

"I was wrong, Will. The Consolidated intends to give us a square deal on our contract. There isn't a joker anywhere in that specification and the order is as plain and explicit as we could ask. Those two little matters I jotted down are mere trifles. We can call attention to them and have them corrected. The only question is whether we're able to swing the job. It'll tie up close to fifty thousand dollars, and we'll have to go in debt for almost all of it."

Day thought, also, that if any contretemps should occur the firm might be ruined; for all the personal capital of both partners was invested in the business. But he made no reference now to risks. He had given Conroy his promise to take them; he did not recede from his position an inch.

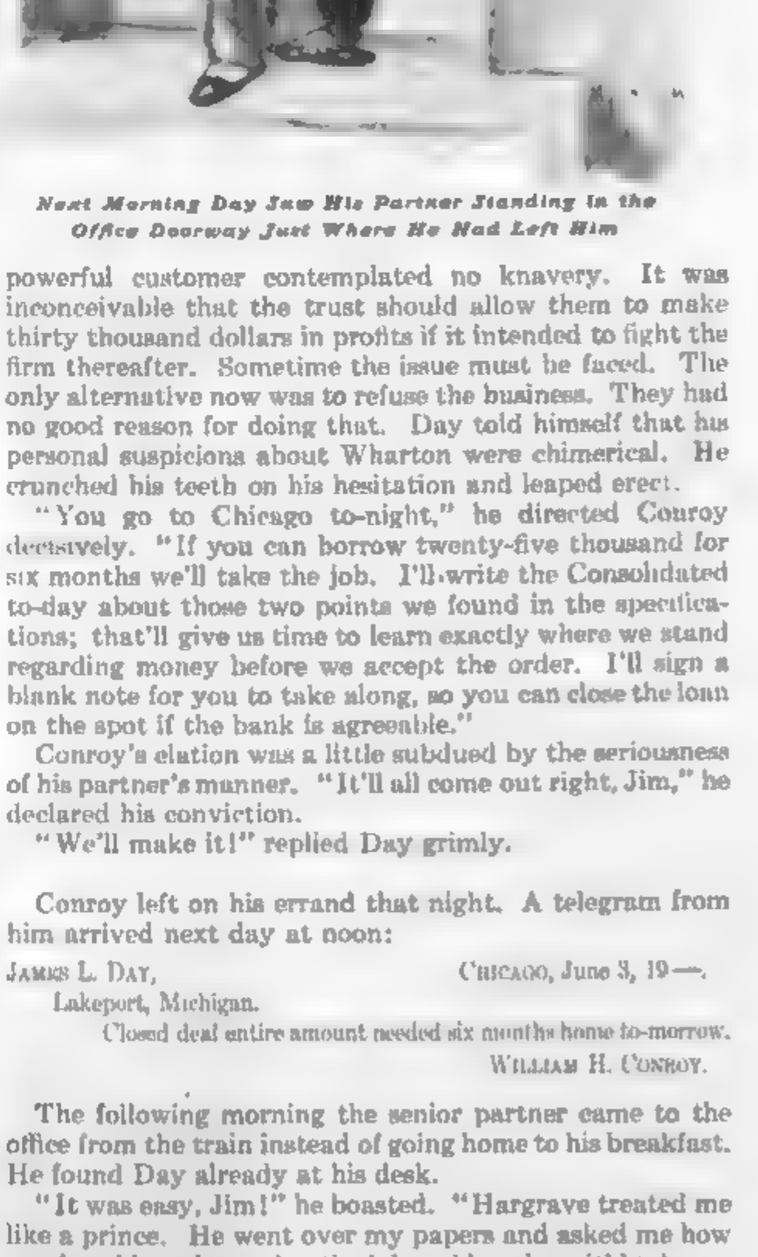
The senior partner impetuously picked up the Consolidated Electric Company order. He pointed to the shipping instruction:

"They allow us until the first of November, Jim. We can put on a night crew and won't have to buy any additional machinery or make extra tools. All we have to figure on is the raw material and the labor. Forty thousand dollars ought to cover them—forty-five at the most."

"Can we borrow the money?" Day brushed aside the minor detail of the exact amount.

Conroy had a plan ready. "I'm sure I can take this order," he urged, "with our cost records and the Consolidated contract and get twenty-five thousand from our Chicago bank for six months. And I know we can arrange to give our notes to the mills where we buy the copper and brass and iron if we explain the situation to them. Our credit always has been first grade; certainly we ought to be able to finance a juicy order like this. Do you realize, Jim, that this one job will net us close to thirty thousand dollars?"

The junior partner gripped the arms of his chair. He was fighting his better judgment. But, after all, would it not be best to end the suspense? The intrinsic value of the firm's contract must be tested. If this big order should go through without a hitch and should be paid for promptly, Conroy & Day practically might be sure that their



Next Morning Day Saw His Partner Standing in the Office Doorway Just Where He Had Left Him

powerful customer contemplated no knavery. It was inconceivable that the trust should allow them to make thirty thousand dollars in profits if it intended to fight the firm thereafter. Sometime the issue must be faced. The only alternative now was to refuse the business. They had no good reason for doing that. Day told himself that his personal suspicions about Wharton were chimerical. He crunched his teeth on his hesitation and leaped erect.

"You go to Chicago to-night," he directed Conroy decisively. "If you can borrow twenty-five thousand for six months we'll take the job. I'll write the Consolidated to-day about those two points we found in the specifications; that'll give us time to learn exactly where we stand regarding money before we accept the order. I'll sign a blank note for you to take along, so you can close the loan on the spot if the bank is agreeable."

Conroy's elation was a little subdued by the seriousness of his partner's manner. "It'll all come out right, Jim," he declared his conviction.

"We'll make it!" replied Day grimly.

Conroy left on his errand that night. A telegram from him arrived next day at noon:

JAMES L. DAY, CHICAGO, June 3, 19—.
Lakeport, Michigan.

Closed deal entire amount needed six months home to-morrow.

WILLIAM H. CONROY.

The following morning the senior partner came to the office from the train instead of going home to his breakfast. He found Day already at his desk.

"It was easy, Jim!" he boasted. "Hargrave treated me like a prince. He went over my papers and asked me how much we'd need to swing the job and how long it'd take us. I told him we'd have to tie up about fifty thousand, but could manage ten without borrowing. I explained that we planned to give our notes to the mills for the metal, and that we'd need only about twenty-five thousand in money to carry us through. He had a suggestion to make on that. He said it would be liable to hurt our general credit to issue notes for raw material, and proposed that we borrow from the bank the whole amount we require, instead of just part of it. He said the bank always preferred to put out its money on quick turns, and that he thought the president would approve a forty-thousand-dollar loan to us for six months.

"Of course I hadn't expected any such luck, but I saw right away Hargrave's point about giving our notes for metal. It probably would hurt our commercial rating if Dun and Bradstreet should get hold of it. So I said we'd be glad to have the forty thousand and Hargrave went to talk with the president about it. Pretty soon he came back smiling and told me it'd be all right. He said they knew the Consolidated Electric Company very well and that an order from them was as good security as anybody could want.

"We'll Have to Ask You to Pay Ten Per Cent Extra if We Ship Them at Once"

So he made out a note at six per cent and I executed a collateral assignment of the order and contract. Here's a copy."

The junior partner took the duplicate of the assignment agreement and read it carefully.

"I wouldn't have put my name to that," was his quiet comment. "You have assigned as security not only the order and the account to become due but also our contract with the Consolidated to which our original patent is attached. That collateral form is so worded that in case we do not pay our note at maturity the bank will be subrogated in our rights to all the papers deposited with it. It can sell us out at private vendue without notice if we should default. The Consolidated, acting through a dummy, could buy in its contract with us, together with the basic patent itself, and thereafter wouldn't have to pay a cent of royalties to anybody!"

Conroy staggered, and crumpled into a chair.

"I never thought I was doing that!" he gasped. "All I intended to assign was the order and the account. The contract fixes the prices for the requisition; so Hargrave said that should be left with the bank too. It never occurred to me there would be any objections."

"There wouldn't be except for the patent's being included in the contract." Day handed the assignment copy to his partner. He cogitated while Conroy read in a new light what he had signed. "Will, I don't like the fact that our Chicago bank is so well acquainted with the Consolidated. They may be working together in this to trap us some way."

"How could they be?" Conroy argued desperately. "Hargrave had no idea I was coming to see him yesterday. And he didn't have time to talk on the phone with anybody while he was away from me. He came back from the president's office in about two minutes."

"All that is suspicious," Day retorted. "It isn't natural. Wharton thinks a long way ahead. He knows where we bank, of course; naturally if we needed money to swing a big order that's the place we'd go first. He probably notified the bank to expect us. Hargrave wasn't at all surprised when you walked in and asked for a bigger loan than we ever made before. That forty thousand came too easy, just as Wharton signed the contract with me too readily last year."

"But we haven't spent any of the money yet!" Conroy reminded eagerly. "We can pay it back right away!"

The junior partner had stiffened in determination as the senior's courage melted. He declared unequivocally against a temporizing policy:

"No. We must face this sort of thing sometime—now is as good as later will be. I believe I see Wharton's scheme. He wants us to make and ship the whole lot of controllers; then he'll find fault, reject the bunch and force us to sue. Our note will have matured meanwhile and we won't be able to pay it. The bank, in cahoots with him, would snap up our contract and sell us out of our patent rights for a song.

"Of course that all may be only a nightmare. Perhaps the Consolidated does not intend to do us dirt. But even if I knew positively that they did, I'd say to take the risk now rather than later. If their present scheme falls through and they realize we guarded against skullduggery from the beginning they are not likely to try it again. My idea is to fight for that thirty thousand dollars in profits. We'll make our contract really valuable for the future if we lick them on this job."

Day's brain had been working fast. He already had in mind the general outline of a plan. He proceeded to state it as if Conroy's assent were a matter of course:

"We'll go ahead with the order and say nothing to anybody of what we suspect. I know Cameron, one of the vice presidents of the Manufacturers' National Bank in Huron. I'll run down there and make him a proposition. He knows we're growing steadily, and two or three times he's told me he'd like to have us bank with them. I'll offer to open an account with the Manufacturers' National immediately. We can put in ten thousand of the forty you got in Chicago. I'll tell Cameron that in about four months we'll probably need to borrow twenty-five thousand to carry us over until spring. I shall propose to him that if he'll loan us the money in October we'll clean up with our Chicago bank and do all our business thereafter with the Manufacturers'.

"I think he'll discount our six months' note on our assets-and-liabilities statement without indorsements or collateral. Then we can give the metal people our notes just as we planned before Hargrave offered you all the money we need. If the Consolidated try any sharp tricks they won't snap us up. We'll have the money to pay on the nail when it's due in Chicago and five months' leeway after that before our indebtedness in Huron matures. Wharton will need those controllers in Pittsburgh by the first of the year. They are planning to start their new plant next spring. I'll bet he comes to time when he sees he has failed to break us. He won't know how we managed to outwit him. I'm willing to take the risk if you are. What do you say?"

Conroy, who had been cocksure of his ground before the snare was pointed out to him, now vacillated. It took Day half an hour to convince him that the proposed course was the only practicable way to test the value of the firm's contract.

"It's a big gamble!" the older man groaned. "But we've got to chance it. Go ahead, Jim. I'll stand by you."

Within a week after the junior partner made his trip to Huron the new account was opened with the Manufacturers' National Bank.

The vice president had agreed to discount the firm's six months' note for twenty-five thousand dollars in October, provided that the average deposit balance kept meanwhile should justify the credit line.

Thereafter Conroy & Day mailed to Huron about half their receipts from miscellaneous customers. They took precautions against disclosing to their Chicago bank the fact that they had opened a new account. In the meantime the raw material for the big Pittsburgh installation was purchased and arrangements were made with the mills to settle with notes for the heaviest items. The partners had resolved that they would not in any circumstances check out more than twenty-five thousand of the forty thousand dollars they had secured on their collateral loan. They kept the extra fifteen thousand in a lump sum as if they did not have it at all. It was used only for the purpose of maintaining a substantial balance in the Manufacturers' National, to which it was transferred gradually in checks for odd amounts so as not to arouse the suspicions of the Chicago bank.

The controllers on the big order were nearly all completed October first. In ten days more every item included in the requisition would be ready for testing. The Consolidated Electric Company had written occasional letters in which it inquired regarding the progress of the apparatus and had been kept informed by the firm's answers. And once a traveling inspector of the Consolidated had called at Conroy & Day's factory to verify a report.

Day feared only one hitch in his program—at the twelfth hour the Huron bank might fail him. It was not impossible that Wharton had ferreted out the ruse. He might have thwarted its success by a word in Cameron's ear. Apprehensions on this score, however, proved groundless. The junior partner went again to the Manufacturers' National shortly after October first. The firm's note for twenty-five thousand dollars which he proffered was promptly discounted.

He was fully convinced when he returned to Lakeport that any perfidious scheme of the big trust to ruin him and his partner had been checkmated. The new money borrowed and the fifteen thousand dollars untouched aggregated the amount of their obligation to the Chicago bank due two months thereafter. When that should have been paid in full they could stand a siege four months longer without disaster. The Consolidated Electric, as was generally known in the trade, planned to open its new Pittsburgh plant before spring. Therefore it would have to install the controllers some time in the course of the winter. Day meant to stand pat and force a show-down before the firm's note should mature in Huron.

About three weeks prior to the delivery date specified in requisition 118697-P a second Consolidated Electric Company inspector came to Conroy & Day's factory. He checked up the controllers in the testing and shipping rooms where all the machines for the Pittsburgh installation now were assembled.

Five days later a registered letter from the Consolidated Electric Company arrived. Conroy opened and read it. He ran in utter consternation to his partner's desk.

"Jim, look at this!" he gasped. "They're canceling the order! They can't do that!"

Day's chin jutted forward like the undershot jaw of a bulldog. He took the letter and swept his eyes over it. Then he read it aloud very precisely:

"NEW YORK, October 11, 19—.

"CONROY & DAY,
"Lakeport, Michigan.

"*Gentlemen:* Please take notice that we shall not require the material listed in our requisition 118697-P, specification 84791-K thereto attached. Said requisition is hereby canceled in accordance with the right reserved therein.

"Respectfully,
"Consolidated Electric Company,
"A. F. LEWIS, *Manager of Supplies.*"

"They can't do that!" frantic Conroy screamed. "It's against the law!"

"Wharton's got lawyers who can dodge any law ever passed!" snarled Day. "One of 'em dictated that letter. See how it reads: 'Said requisition is hereby canceled in accordance with the right reserved therein!' Now, what's the meaning of that? They've hid a joker on us and we have got to find it." He ran to the filing cabinet in the corner, rummaged among the contents and ripped out what he wanted. "Here are our shop copies of that order and specification. We'll go through 'em with a fine-tooth comb. They're exact duplicates of the originals the bank's got in Chicago. I compared 'em myself when Miss Bell typed them."

For fifteen minutes the partners bent tensely over the papers outspread on the table. At the end of their fierce scrutiny they stared at each other baffled. Suddenly another idea flashed to Day. He darted to the files again and brought to Conroy one of the Consolidated Electric Company's minor requisitions that had been filled and paid for.

"The catch must be in the printed part, Will," he surmised. "We're so familiar with their standard form that we never stop to examine one any more as we would an order from a new customer." He read aloud the two lines of type below the signature on the paper in his hand: "'This requisition is issued subject to all the terms and conditions on the back hereof.'" He flipped the sheet over and carefully perused the dozen or more paragraphs of eight-point type printed on the reverse side. He looked up nonplused. "This is one of their regular requisition forms just like the Pittsburgh order came on; but there isn't anything here about a reserved right to cancel." He cogitated. "What the devil does that letter mean?"

"That's what I'd like to know!" sputtered hysterical Conroy. "It's—it's a confounded outrage!"

"It's just the sort of thing we've been getting ready for!" the junior partner snapped. "For heaven's sake keep quiet!" he summarily cut off another helpless wail. "I knew it would come, though I didn't guess this particular way. I am thankful we had our eyes open before it hit us."

"But what are we going to do?" begged Conroy, wringing his hands.

Day tramped the floor a minute while his partner slumped in a chair and followed Day's every movement with the eyes of utter despair. Abruptly the younger man halted, faced the older and shot his decision:

(Continued on Page 37)

"We Will Take It! I'm Not a Coward, if You Are!"

THE HUMAN FRACTION

By Maude Radford Warren

ILLUSTRATED BY IRMA DÉRÈMEAUX

"I Can Support My Wife Without Calling on My Father-in-Law"

THERE are two kinds of human fractions: First, the man or woman who was once a whole number, doing a full person's work in the world, naturally aware of the fact, and aware now of the fractional state. But such a fraction at least does not rob any other whole number. Second, the man or woman—and chiefly woman—who could be a whole number, but prefers her particular state because it is comfortable, and because being a whole number would mean that she would have to pay her own way in the world. As a fraction some one else pays for her.

Usually this second sort wins to her fractional position by being pretty, but sometimes she achieves it by making use of a blood tie. John Stuart's womankind were fractions of that kind. His mother was "genteel"—the sort of woman who did her own housework under protest, which she hid from the world though not from her husband. She let her husband see that she thought there was something wrong with him or he'd have been able to provide her with a servant; but she told her friends that it was easier for her to do things herself than to be always showing lazy creatures how. Every one called her "genteel," her reputation arising chiefly because she taught her son John and his sister Cora how to read French. She also taught Cora how to paint pretty water-color pictures of pink and green orchards. Cora could also play Weber's Last Waltz and Monastery Bells on the piano. So she passed as accomplished.

John Stuart's mother had broken her husband's pride with her gentility and what lay behind it. He was not a strong soul, of course, or he would have refused to let it be broken. Some men of shattered pride turn melancholy and listless, and some turn meek and sweet. John Stuart's father was of the latter type. The children grew up vaguely pitying their mother for being married to a man who, however agreeable in his filial relationships, was not congenial and not big enough for her. He had had no voice in the bringing up of his children. Cora was taught that she must always be a lady; John was taught that he must always be a gentleman and take care of his mother and sister. Cora, being a lady, must not be allowed to work for her living. Her parents would take care of her till she married. Cora was not pretty, but her mother was sure that some day a gentleman would appear who would appreciate the accomplishments of a genteel young lady and marry her.

Girls That are Too Refined to Work

ONE day Mrs. Stuart's husband died. It was very inconvenient, for it happened to be at a time of especial merrymaking in the little Eastern town in which they lived. Some new patent-medicine factories had been started and there were unmarried managers and bookkeepers on hand. Cora could ill spare the time to go into mourning, for she was twenty-five and so far had not appealed to any prospective husband. Her brother, who believed in her as devoutly as he did in his mother, was almost her sole escort. But death chooses his own hours without regard to matrimonial schemes. The dead man's sister, who was neither a fraction nor genteel, asked the widow what her plans were, knowing that there was left only a trifle of insurance and the house the family lived in.

"Do?" the widow said. "Live for my children of course."

"I expect that means live on John," thought the sister-in-law. Aloud she said: "I was wondering if you'd try to get a place as housekeeper or something, since you've not got enough to live on."

The widow bridled.

"None of my people have ever had to work in that way. I shall make a home for my son and daughter."

"Hm!" reflected John's aunt. "Well, maybe it can be done. John gets only a hundred a month managing the electric-light plant, and he'll never get more in this place. But you own the house, and if you'll have a little vegetable garden, and be economical with your clothes, why things may run on in the old way till John gets ready to marry."

John's mother put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"What's Cora going to do?" asked her sister-in-law; "for of course John can't support her too. If he did he'd never be able to save anything, and he'd never have a penny for his own amusements."

"Work!" cried Mrs. Stuart. "Work, do you mean? She'd spoil all her chances for marriage. None of the refined girls in this town work."

"Well, all those refined girls you are thinking of have fathers to support them. Now I'll tell you what I'll do: Cora is quick with her fingers, and her uncle and I will pay for a course in typewriting and stenography for her. Then she can earn her own living and won't be a burden on John."

Mrs. Stuart broke into sobs and incoherent sounds from which could be disentangled such words as "genteel" and "insulted" and "unappreciated." When John came in she flung herself on his neck and asked him if it was true that he felt her and Cora to be burdens, and that all he had to do was say so and they would go away. John gathered that his aunt had been brutal to his mother in her time of bereavement. He was gentle, like his father, so he avoided a family dispute, merely saying to his aunt that of course she meant well, but that he would take care of his mother and sister.

"Maybe I won't be here to burden you long," his mother said.

From time to time during the months that followed she repeated that remark, whenever she thought John was growing restive in his curtailed life. For curtailed it certainly was. Cora and her mother did their best to get Cora married; indeed, the girl spent ten times more energy on that than she would have on a course in stenography. But somehow those men in town who were marriageable went on looking past Cora. Mrs. Stuart said none of them was worth marrying, and that Cora was young yet; but her eyes had a strained look. John said nothing, but when he had to wear an overcoat that was four years old, when he smoked cheap cigars and few of them, when he took no vacation more elaborate than a few days' camping beside lakes near home, then he went so far as to wish that Cora had been a boy. Mrs. Stuart was not unobserving. She knew when John had said "No" to friends who wanted him to join them in this and that pleasure. It was at such times that she hinted to John that she would not burden him much longer. Then John would be seized with remorse at the slight rebellion he had felt over his restricted lot, and would take a fresh grip on his duty.

Mrs. Stuart was not exactly a human fraction. She was willing to pay her way to a certain extent as a home maker; but she insisted on laying down the lines of her work herself, and her system of mathematics required that John should be a whole number, plus a fraction, in order that Cora should genteelly remain a fraction. To John his mother was a type of noble womanhood, and his reason for thinking so was that from babyhood she had pressed that inference upon him. Cora, who had all her mother's selfishness and none of her perceptions, took as a matter of course all her brother did for her. She remarked once to her mother that except for John she would doubtless have been married long before; other men counted on her brother's looking after her.

Because John was always Cora's escort, and because he had no money to spend, he showed no special attention to any girl. He had his dreams, to be sure, but he knew well that they were dreams. When he was twenty-six a new girl came to town, Azalia Blair. Her father and mother came, too, Mr. Blair being the manager in one of the patent-medicine factories; but it was only Azalia who counted in their opinion and in hers, and also in John's. Azalia was a lovely, fluffy, appealing creature, the youngest of a large family, and quite thoroughly spoiled. She, like Cora, was a human fraction; but John did not know this. He did not know either that he was attracted to Azalia because it was time for him to fall in love, and because Azalia was the only girl he knew with whom he had not grown up. He did not suppose he was in love with her, because he understood that it was illogical for him to fall in love as long as his mother and Cora were dependent upon him; but he did definitely say to himself that if ever he fell in love it would be with a little blue-eyed, rounded girl like Azalia. His mother and sister were rather angular and tall. Azalia danced with him rather less impartially than she did with the other young men she knew, for John was very handsome. Though Azalia was thinking of marriage, she was not doing it so unreservedly and whole-heartedly as Cora was, for she was younger than Cora, and her own intentions were rather well concealed from herself by her romantic bent. Azalia was not yet tired of dancing and flirting.

Azalia, the Clinging Vine

A YEAR or two passed, and then sheer accident relieved John of his two human fractions and gave him the chance to add to himself another human fraction. Mrs. Stuart went to Buffalo to meet her only brother, who was passing from the Far West, where he had a ranch, to the Far East, to see what New York was like. He was accompanied by a friend who had never before crossed the Divide. This friend, who had lived a lonely bachelor life, was charmed by the atmosphere of home which Mrs. Stuart managed to cast about herself after she found he liked it. He was touched by her devotion to her children, for whom only, as she frequently told him, she was living. At the end of a week he had got her to promise to live for him. They went to New York on their honeymoon, while the delighted Cora packed her trunks to go back with them to the West, where men were plentiful. John journeyed to Buffalo to meet his mother and to see them both off. His mother told him with tears that she did not regret any of the sacrifices she had made for him, and that she would not leave him now but that she felt that she and Cora had been hanging too long about his neck and that he deserved his freedom. John almost wept too. He told his stepfather in all sincerity that there wasn't a woman in the world like his mother, and that he didn't see how he was going to get along without her.

After his mother and sister were gone and the place was rented, John lived in a boarding house and missed them sincerely. Then by degrees he missed them less, for he was beginning to taste the youth he had lost after his father's death. He was buying the clothes he wanted and making calls without having first to consider the plans of his mother and sister. His pleasure in being able to offer entertainment to his friends was almost pathetic. The person he singled out for his chief attention was Azalia Blair.

By this time Azalia was twenty-four, still a belle, but not quite so popular as she had been. This was partly because a new group of seventeen and eighteen year old girls had swum into the social pool of the town, and partly because all the eligible and attractive men of her own group were

married or engaged. Azalia was ready to be engaged, too, and as she liked John, his assiduous courtship, assisted by her romantic tendency, changed her liking into as much love as she was capable of feeling.

Cora Stuart did not possess the outer appearance of a human fraction, but Azalia did. In her cradle she had looked so tender and fragile that her parents had given her the name of Azalia. As she grew she developed an alluring helplessness. She was not allowed to do anything without aid, except cry and get her teeth, and even then she had her devoted parents and elder sisters suffering with her. Somebody always dressed her and got her lessons for her, and later on sewed for her. She could not, of course, have lived in a household where no servant was kept without learning a little bit about cooking. That is, she could boil an egg, or make toast or coffee; but she had never broiled a steak in her life, and did not know how long any given vegetable should cook. She had never made a bed or washed a pan. In all her twenty-four years she had never done one useful thing for the benefit of anyone else, and but few useful things for herself.

Yet she was as unconscious of selfishness as the fire is of burning. She had lived in an atmosphere of love and admiration, and a sweet response seemed to her all that was required of her. She expected life to be easy for her. She must have known that there was a large percentage of sick or unlucky human beings for whom life was not easy, but it never occurred to her to ask herself why she should expect more than they received. Her lot must have softness and happiness because she required and demanded these qualities.

The Helpless, Appealing Azalia

AZALIA'S parents were delighted at her engagement to John. They said that a man who had been so good to his mother and sister would surely be good to his wife. Some of Azalia's friends—young married women—said to their husbands that it did seem a pity that after John's experience with his mother and Cora he hadn't chosen a wife who would help him instead of demanding to be carried in his arms all the way. The husbands, who had been charmed with Azalia's appealing helplessness, said they guessed she'd take responsibility when she was married. The wives made various replies, but they all knew that the average girl must come to marriage with a knowledge already gained, or else she never can meet adequately the many problems involved in settling down with another personality that will inevitably prove itself to be strange, though beloved.

John's relatives were not so well pleased as Azalia's. His aunt came from her home in a neighboring town to look Azalia over. She carried away the conviction that John had got another Old Man of the Sea on his back, and that this one would cling longer than his mother and sister had. John's mother told her husband that it was hard, indeed, considering the example she had set of abnegation and duty, that her son should pick up a mollusk like Azalia. Her husband, a little disillusioned, though not so much so as he would have been had he not been a determined idealist, reflected that maybe John had been overfed with duty and wanted a change. He heard a good deal about it himself.

Cora had married a well-to-do rancher, and had proved to herself by various methodical calculations that by and large, and other things being equal, she had done better matrimonially than any of her friends. She, therefore, was inclined to think that John had stooped to Azalia. She said to her husband that Mr. and Mrs. Blair had brought up a large family, and it stood to reason that they could not have much saved; it would have been better if John, who could never hope to earn much more than twelve hundred a year, had proposed to some girl with money of her own. Cora had, of course, brought no money to her husband, but neither of them thought of that.

He suggested that Cora give up to John her prospective share in the little place in New York State. John's mother was called into consultation, and the upshot was that the small property was given to John as a wedding present.

That act, which meant little to the two women whose husbands had given them farms worth much more, clinched in John's mind the conviction that his mother and sister were the best women in the world outside Azalia.

John had assumed that he and Azalia would live in his house; but Azalia showed him his mistake.

"Oh, but darling," she protested, "it rents for three hundred a year, and we can do so much more with the money."

"But—but surely you don't think of boarding, Azalia!" he said. "A man wants a home."

"Oh, and so does a woman," she murmured, nestling to him; "and a home with you ——"

But presently John, who in some ways was very tenacious, came back to the main discussion.

"But then if we don't board we'll have to rent, and that would cost as much ——"

"I thought we'd live with father and mother," Azalia said. "That would combine a home and boarding."

"I see," John said doubtfully.

"They've always had me," Azalia said plaintively; "and they've been so sweet about giving me up to you. I know they would rather I just belonged to them forever, but they've no thought but for our happiness. They love you too. They're getting old and I don't like to leave them."

"Yes, but we could live near them. You could see them every day."

"It would be less responsibility for me too," Azalia said. "I'm not so useful and strong as some girls, John. Sometimes I wonder if I'm doing right to let you marry me. At first I thought it would be just enough if I were an inspiration to you, sweetening your life. But if I were the sort of girl who could wash and scrub as well as do all the cooking, maybe I would make a better wife for a poor man. It's not too late yet, darling. I don't want to wrong you. If you think it wiser to break off now—it would kill me, but if it's for your good ——"

Azalia's words had all the conviction of self-centeredness, sentimentality and self-deception, and they were addressed to a chivalric man deeply in love. John felt as if he had been a brute.

"Work! She'd Spoil All Her Chances for Marriage"

He protested that she suited him just as she was, that he would not want her changed in any respect, and that, of course, they would live with her father and mother if she wished it. Azalia had the unconscious cunning that often goes with lack of self-knowledge—a cunning that somehow includes a grasp on the psychology of other people, and that supplies the skill with which to manage them.

"Darling," she cooed, "promise me that if ever I disappoint you, then you will remember that I was ready to give you up. The choice of going on is yours."

John assumed all responsibility, with many compliments on her noble generosity.

"I love you devotedly," she went on, "but we must each give what we can in this partnership of marriage. By living with father and mother I can not only give a good deal to them, but much more to you. Mother and I will share the cares of the house, and then I can keep my youth and freshness all the longer for you."

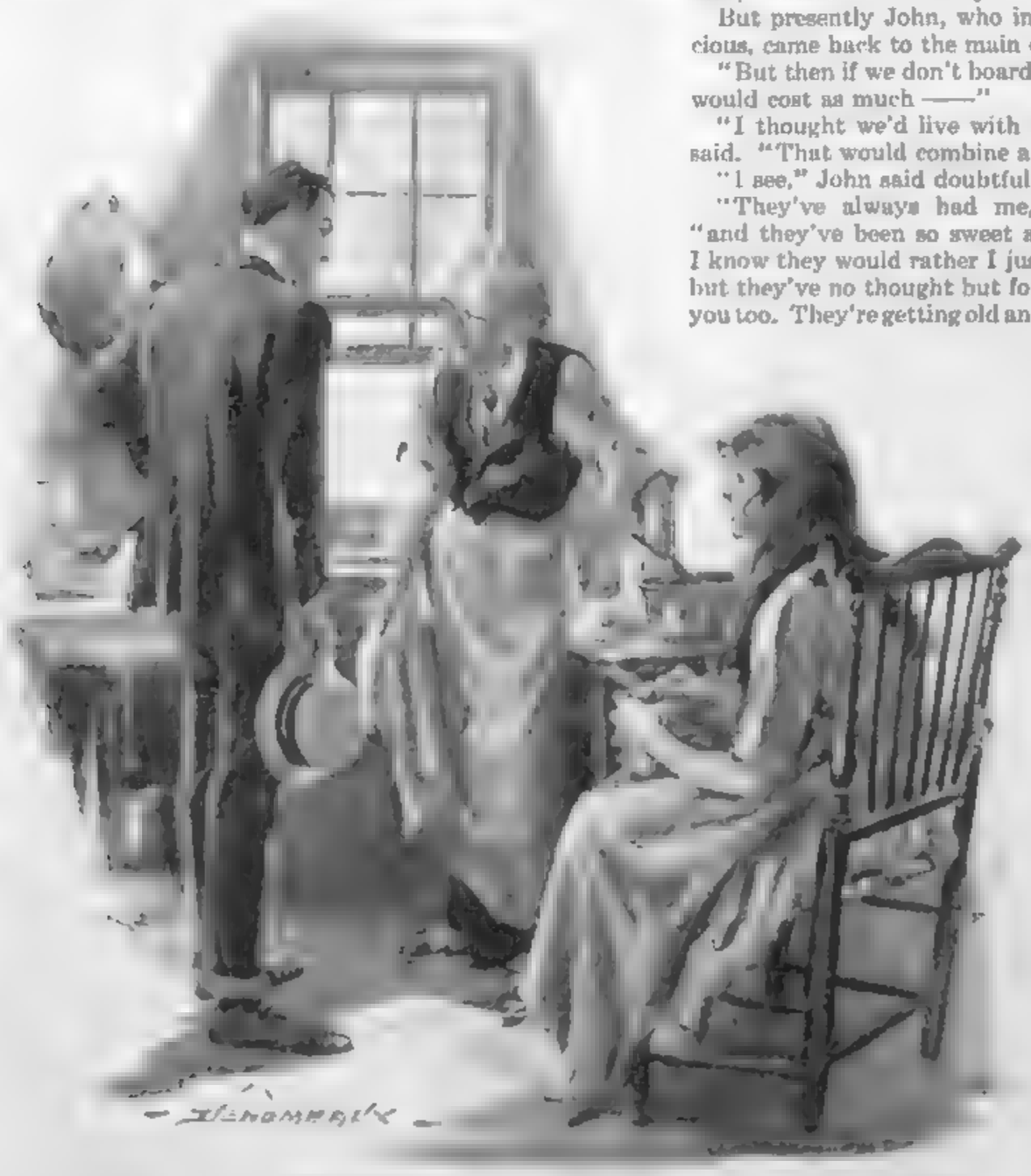
John's Kind-Hearted Mother-in-Law

HE SAID just what all men deeply in love say, and with the same belief that no one would ever mean his vows so deeply as he did. So they were married, and after their honeymoon they went to live with the Blairs. The difference that having Azalia in the house as a married woman meant to Mrs. Blair was simply that she had one more person to work for and board money from two persons. The money was put in the bank, in a joint account for herself and Azalia. She felt that she could not take pay from her own children. John soon ceased to feel that he was in another man's home, for both the Blairs were tactful and self-effacing. As his affection for his mother-in-law increased he began to wonder if Azalia helped her very much. He knew that his wife not only never had any share in getting breakfast, but always came late to the meal. He returned for the midday dinner, and he saw that it was Mrs. Blair who carried in the food and did whatever waiting was necessary. At night he noticed that Azalia never helped with the dishes. He asked his wife about it.

"Oh, I help a lot during the day," she said vaguely. "Of course I keep the evenings free for you."

The explanation sufficed John. It never occurred to him to consider that perhaps Mrs. Blair's evenings should be kept free for Blair. Besides, Blair always helped with the evening dishes.

John discovered that Azalia required a good deal of money for clothes—as much as his mother and Cora together had expected. He was carrying life insurance and saving a little besides, but to pay his wife's bills he had to be as rigid in his own expenditures as he had been before his marriage. He reflected that if they had been keeping house Azalia would have had to do without many of her pretty things. She went out constantly, more even than she had as a girl, and he told himself that of course that took more clothes. She explained to him that she was going out for his sake. When she went out alone it gave her something to bring back to him, and when they went out together it gave them more to do in common. John might have reflected that very often all she brought back to him was tired nerves, and that when they went out together it was



"No, John. You've Got to Make Good at Your New Job, and for a While It'll Take Every Ounce of Energy You Have to Do That"

not so much a case of doing things in common as of talking to and dancing with other people. He was not observing enough to see that Azalia dressed better than any woman in town, and took pleasure in doing it. His aunt knew that people were talking of Azalia's extravagance and wondering how John could afford it. Some thought that he was spending every cent he earned, and others thought that Blair was helping to support his daughter.

Several times Azalia overran her allowance. John at last took a stand. He told her very gently that she must spend less for clothes, that he was giving her all that he could afford.

"But I must have this dress," she said. "I've danced all my other evening dresses into rags."

"Maybe you can make some of them over," he suggested.

"How like a man you talk!" Azalia said with a charming pout. "But never mind, dear, I'll ask father for the money."

"You'll do nothing of the kind, Azalia," John said sharply. "I can support my wife without calling on my father-in-law. You must manage with your allowance as other women do."

"Very well, dear," Azalia said softly. "I'm sorry I'm not a better manager, but I'll try very, very hard."

Azalia never made scenes. She always got her way more surely by a mixture of submission and helplessness. On this occasion she expected John to say he would get her the money she needed somehow this time. Azalia never looked beyond "this time," for she trusted her future always. But John made no such offer, so Azalia went pathetically to her mother, and Mrs. Blair told her the secret of the bank account in their two names. Thereafter when Azalia ran beyond her allowance she drew on the board money her husband paid.

For three or four years Azalia's care-free life went on. Then she was a prospective mother. She welcomed the thought of the baby. Everybody had children. They seemed to be a great happiness, and she was tired of her empty life. She was aware that John was vaguely disappointed, and she was sure that if they had children there wouldn't be anything for which he could blame her. John was indeed vaguely disappointed. Azalia was always sweet and lovely and a joy to look at, but she was utterly without ideas or ideals. She could talk only personalities; she knew nothing of his work or interests. A conversation with anything like a thought in it bored her. Yet John blamed himself, if he blamed any one, for expecting more than he got. Every marriage, he was sure, must lack something.

But the prospects of the baby effaced all feelings of disappointment. That was what he and Azalia needed to make their life complete. The old happiness of his courtship days came back, and his tenderness and chivalry increased tenfold. They had need to, for after Azalia was unable to go out and when she began to feel the discomfort of her condition, her surface sweetness wore away. She became fretful and exacting. Mrs. Blair told John that women often acted out of character under such circumstances. John's aunt spoke more plainly and told Azalia that she wasn't the only woman in the world that was expecting a baby, and that plenty of women suffered more than she did and had no loving care whatever. She asked Azalia what she supposed she was in the world for, and begged her to remember that there were several million human beings deserving just as much consideration as herself, and in the opinion of John's aunt decidedly more. John's aunt, once she let herself go, prided herself on plain speaking. She spoke herself out of John's home, for Azalia had hysterics and demanded that that dreadful woman be sent away forever.

The baby was born with as much trouble as the average baby, but Azalia and her mother, who had herself borne six children, acted as if Azalia were suffering as no woman had ever suffered. John felt humble and guilty, and Azalia made the most of his abasement. She nursed the little girl herself, taking great credit for the circumstance, but she did little for the baby beyond this. All the strenuous care fell to her mother's lot, Blair and John helping out by getting breakfast and washing the supper dishes. In these days John heard a good deal of the energy a mother gives to her nursing child. When the baby was a few months old, and had developed unusual prettiness, Azalia took a good deal of pride in wheeling her out in her carriage. The remarks of friends and strangers upon the child's beauty fed her vanity. She named the child Patricia, and bought her extravagant clothes to match the name. She was never done praising the child to John, and any reservation he had ever felt toward her disappeared in his admiration for her sense of motherhood. He did not realize that of a mother's service, beyond nursing, she gave her child precisely nothing, and that her sense of satisfaction in little Patricia was merely a manifestation of egotism.

If two children are better than one, John's belief in Azalia's sense of motherhood should have received a severe shock at the way she acted when she found that she was to have another baby. Seeing her husband's hurt amazement she explained to him that it was not of herself she was thinking, but of the new baby. She did not consider that she was yet physically strong enough to bring another child into the world. Her parents and her husband took the best of care of her, and she imposed on them all with her usual sweet selfishness. When the baby came it was a strong girl, and John, in his wild relief, teased Azalia about her unnecessary fears.

Azalia was tired of going out to the extent to which she had gone in the past. She had developed a languid laziness during Patricia's nursing days. She liked the pose and clung to it. She fell into the manner of semi-invalidism, and this was largely self-deception. She couldn't put herself in the wrong; and so since she had said she did not have energy enough to give to a second child, it meant that in bearing a strong baby she had robbed herself. She told John with great sweetness that she did not mind. What did it matter if her health was sapped if only her little Beatrix were well! She said nobody was to blame, but the way she said it made John feel that if she had had less sweetness and charity she would have blamed him.

John's aunt, allowed to come to see the baby as a mark of Azalia's sweet forgiveness, remarked to her husband—about the safest confidant a woman has—that Azalia was nothing but a fat lump of selfishness, and that the only good she'd do in the world would be indirect and heavily mixed with evil. She would make of John a saintly workhorse, and would probably kill him off as John's father had been killed; and she would breed unselfishness in her daughters, as vampires always did. The result would be one husband and father in an early grave, and two angelic girls on whom two selfish husbands would later prey.

(Concluded on Page 29)

MIND-CAT!

By FANNIE HURST

ILLUSTRATED BY WLADYSLAW T. BENDA

POETS and painters, cartoonists and beautifying cold cream advertisements, life-insurance statisticians and medical science have all conspired to endow the figure of Old Age with hardened arteries and empty gums, senility and the deep ravages of crow's-feet.

As a matter of fact, on the white heads of the world rest crowns, seven-figure corporations and international golf championships. Grandfather's easy-chair is oftener than not the swivel. Yet character actors still gum out their front teeth and collapse to an angle of debility and forty-five degrees when called on to portray threescore and ten.

But the hand that rocks the cradle of the grandchild is oftener than not manicured rather than palsied. It is as though the skinny fingers of Father Time had been trained by the modern skill of a Delsarte to descend—not like the touch of Midas to turn into yellow gold, but to mellow.

So descended the immortal hand on Mrs. Shapiro—gently, as apple blossoms flutter down to whiten the floor of an orchard; gently, like snow covering a garden to give it warmth. Lines lay on her face, but lightly, as the finely written characters of an old love letter fade into the paper; and on her bosom, only slightly withered, even the remaining softness of motherhood, as though still warm from the heads of children that had couched there; and behind her irises, shining through them, the perpetual light of motherhood, which, like the ever-lighted lamp for the dead, burns on and on.

You who have eyes which see know that light. It burned far back in Mrs. Shapiro's eyes, through their dimness, as sunshine struggles through the opacity of fog; through her thick-lensed, high-powered spectacles, through the cloud of growing uneasiness in her gaze.

At seven o'clock an onyx clock chimed roundly from the parlor; and out over the city bells rang of the impending New Year; and in the street three flights below, a horn squawked here and there, as though a small boy or two were already sounding the signal for the midnight call to popguns and feather ticklers.

"Gee! We Ain't Forgot How to Cut. Have We, Max?"

Mrs. Shapiro leaned forward in her chair in further uneasе and drew apart the lace curtains. Below, the tide of the street bent into a mild December wind and flowed through the first darkness of early evening. But there was nothing more telling to her anxiety than the mirage of lights that flash by o' city nights into the black throat of round the corner; the mystery of figures that vanish into nothing—silhouettes that hurry and flurry with the hither and thither of windblown leaves.

Mrs. Shapiro let fall the curtains and the warmth of the dining room closed her in. A square room, appropriately papered in ocher, grapevine design, with a built-in ledge of plate rack enhancing the border and the apartment rental. A round table spread for three in the room's center, and depending over it, on a heavy-linked chain swung from the ceiling, a colored glass dome, diffusing a white shower of light. The mahogany set, reflecting pools of this light; the cut-glass fruit bowl on the sideboard; and the glass doors of the china closet, reflecting deeper pools; and between the windows the inevitable speckled partridge mounted on an oval wooden slab in inevitable agony. From the kitchen beyond came the pungency and the torpedolike explosions of frying stuffs.

"Lizzie!" (The spattering and sharp reports of cooking grease.) "Lizzie!"

"Yes'm."

"So often ain't I asked you please, when Mr. Aaron is late for supper, you should wait with his chops? So often ain't I asked you, Lizzie?"

"Mrs. Gertie says——"

"Once you should listen to what I say, Lizzie. Little enough I meddle in your kitchen, even when my hands itch enough."

The clatter of wares and the continued sparking, and a haze as blue as a veil drifting between the cracks of the swinging doors.

"Liz-zie! I—— *Ach*, Aaron! Aaron, my boy!"

Enter Mr. Aaron Shapiro in a great flurry of depositing bundles on the neat-laid table, sliding out from his fur-collared greatcoat, switching on the side lights, and, in the sudden radiance, scooping the short, rotund form of his mother out of her chair and placing lips already cold with the kiss of December against hers.

"Little mamma! I wish seventy kisses I could give you. Gertie, where are you? Dark they've got it in the parlor and all, like they was savin' light—and on my little mamma's birthday! Gertie baby!"

Mrs. Shapiro stiffened against her son's embrace and looked up into his face, a virile replica of her own, each feature emphasized as though cut from harder stuff—the hair crisper, the flesh buoyant and, with a vigorous tendency to beard, shaved to the blood.

"Gertie ain't home yet, Aaron."

"What? She ——"

"Some friends where she used to work, Aaron, stopped by in a new automobile they got—Miss Sophie Berkovitch and her brother Max; and to the skatin' rink she went with them."

"Where do they come in, that crowd?"

"Max Berkovitch, what worked as city salesman for Loeb Millinery Company when she was hat model there. Right well he must be doin', Aaron—new little automobile and all! Him and his sister, Aaron. Such fun they got skatin', I guess how late it is they forget."

He was suddenly quiet, as though the blood in his veins had ceased to fizz, and flashed out his watch, a gold one with a gold-mounted elk's tooth dangling from the fob.

"Why didn't you and her go to the matinée on your birthday, like I said, mamma? Why ——"

"I—I—Gertie's old friends, Aaron, when they came for her, what could she do?"

"Max Berkovitch and his sister! What does she want to be runnin' round with that sporty gang for? If he's got an automobile he made it on the side gamblin'. How he holds his job at Loeb's I don't know! For us he couldn't sell sunbonnets. What does she wanna be runnin' round with him for?"

"And his sister, Aaron. When they came what could she do? I was the one said she should go, Aaron. For the theater I don't care anyway. Always you remember how poor papa used to beg me to go to the German Theater and always asleep I used to go? A shame for the money ——"

"That ain't the thing; she ——"

"*Ach*, Aaron; for what you make a long face? To-night is New Year's Eve; and if you want it so much that I go to the theater on my birthday, I go to-night with you and Gertie. But balcony seats, Aaron!"

"Sophie and Max Berkovitch she has to run with yet! Such a sporty crowd! It's bad enough she used to have to work in the same firm with him."

"I said 'No' at first, too, Aaron, but when I seen how she wanted it I didn't have the heart to meddle."

He let his hand fall heavily on her shoulder and patted it with that same heaviness.

"Ah, mamma, I know you; for peace you say anything!"

"Look, Aaron, right here under my picture of poor papa, I got on me the breastpin you and Gertie give me for my birthday—see, right under poor papa's picture."

"Yes, yes, mamma; on that lace collar it looks good."

"Such extravagance, Aaron! Never before a real diamond I had in my life. Poor papa he wasn't a money-maker like you, Aaron—always only a poor tailor; but, *ach*, Aaron, that he could have lived to see that in one year in the wholesale millinery his boy makes what poor papa never knew how to make in ten!"

"You was happy on less, mamma. What's the difference?"

"*Ach*, Aaron, how happy!" Tears flowed in her voice.

"Yes, yes, mamma!" But his tones were preoccupied and his attitude strained, like one who listens for a footstep and, listening, watches. "Yes, yes, mamma!"

"Poor papa, Aaron! Five years already. Always he made such a fuss on my birthday. Sometimes next to his picture I got on my table, Aaron, I sit and sit and look in its eyes till I can just feel us back in the old flat over the shop, and hear the machines goin' downstairs, and you playin' little tailor on the floor."

"Mamma, you shouldn't let yourself ever get the blues. You're in a new flat now, with grand comforts."

"It ain't the blues I get, son; I like to live back them days. I can live 'em so plain that when I get through, and see it's nothin' but poor papa's picture I been pretending with, I—I just feel like I could lay my head down right next to his picture, Aaron, and ——"

"Mamma, you mustn't—you ——"

"I'm just a silly old woman, but it's only on birthdays; and—and on our anniversary I get like that, Aaron. I—I get to thinkin' and all. Such a good man he was—just so good a-husband as you a son, Aaron; and I—I could lay my head down right next to his picture and—and ——"

More tears swam in her voice, the ever-ready tears for the beloved dead, which lie in a perpetual pool in the heart.

"Sh-h-h, mamma! You mustn't talk so solemn."

"Right next to him, Aaron, and ——"

"Five minutes after seven! She should be home, mamma." He drew the lace curtains sharply aside and peered through the improvised cup of his hands into the street below. "For her to be out after dark ain't so nice! She knows how you worry about automobiles."

"I—any minute she comes now, Aaron. I ain't worried."

"Skatin' she has to go yet! Such a little devil and so full of life, skatin' she has to go."

"I Ain't Hurt Your Little Feelin's, Have I, Kiddo?"

But in spite of himself Aaron's lips trembled to smile and his frown would relax.

"I'll tell her when she comes home, right in the beginnin' we cut out that sporty crowd. Too fast that young Berkovitch makes money to suit me. But such a kid she is, mamma! Honest, I want that she should stay young!"

"Yes, Aaron."

"To-night we all have your birthday party together—not, mamma? I telephone now for seats. We go to see the Merry Belles, if I have to pay three dollars a seat from a speculator. To-night, mamma, the three of us have a birthday party and a New Year's party together—eh?"

"*Ach*, Aaron, a old woman like me, with ——"

"If you get tired, mamma, right after the theater we come home. Such a noisy New Year's we don't have to have."

"But balcony seats, Aaron; why such extravagance when ——"

In the very face of her remonstrance, however, he was gone into the outer hall, and she could hear the tink of the telephone receiver in the hooking and unhooking; and when he returned he pushed back the soft white hair from her forehead and kissed her on a deep furrow.

"Box seats I had to take, mamma; and don't you say a word."

"But ——"

"For what you got a son, with a good business, if he can't blow his mother and his little wife to the right kind of a New Year's Eve? If you ain't careful a taxicab we have too!"

"*Ach*, Aaron, didn't you promise to mind me and ——"

"I didn't mean it, mamma; we don't have a taxi then. Do I ever break my promise?"

"Never, Aaron; all boys should mind their mothers when they promised like you. So afraid of them automobiles I am, Aaron! Even when you talk about buyin' one, right away the pain in my heart I get."

"You ain't got that pain again, mamma, have you? Tell me, mamma!"

"No, no; but that's how scared I am of automobiles. Such speed, Aaron—it's terrible!"

"All right, then, mamma-la, no taxicab. When I promise to mind my little mamma-la, don't I always do it just like I was a kid?"

"*Ja, ja*, my boy!"

He leaned back in the slim mahogany chair; it groaned beneath his sturdiness.

"Can you beat it? The new furniture won't even hold me. My little wife buys furniture what won't even hold her husband."

"You had more comfort on the old horsehair in the old flat—not, Aaron?"

"It's a good thing we got one stylisher in the family; if I didn't sneak off one night and get married you and me would be livin' in the same old flat yet, with the same two rooms and the shop downstairs—eh, mamma?"

"Them was good times, Aaron."

"You can feel like a lady now, mamma, with Lizzie for the cooking and gold furniture for the parlor."

"Yes, Aaron; all big ideas—a flat up here on Ninety-third Street with a elevator in the hall; I hope you got just so big a pocketbook."

"Two Lizzies I can afford if you want them, mamma. When Gertie fusses you should keep your hand out of the housekeeping. You mustn't feel bad, mamma; she wants to show me what a good little housekeeper she can be herself. And for her friends it don't look nice you should always be in the kitchen like in the old flat. She wants you to have it easy, mamma."

"But, Aaron, how glad I am to be in the kitchen you should know; all day I got nothin' to do."

"To play the lady, ain't that enough for one little mamma-la?" And he must pinch her aging cheek and wuggle a forefinger.

"Such a help I could be if she'd let me, Aaron. Since that day you walked off and got married right out of the store, I made up my mind not to interfere with husband and wife; but such a waste in the household I could save you, Aaron."

"She don't mean nothin', mamma; she's so full of life like a kitten."

"A good girl, Aaron—not raised like the girls we know, but a good girl."

"Always till now, mamma, she had to work hard enough; and a little temper like hers don't mean nothin'. Sometimes I think it only makes her prettier when she gets sorry like a baby afterward."

"A pretty girl, Aaron."

"Style she likes, because always before she couldn't have had any. The first day she came over to work for me, mamma, right away I thought such a pretty girl I never seen. You should have seen her! The first hat I put on her was for Morris Stern, of Kansas City. What a tight buyer he is you know. Without asking the price, right away he ordered three gross. High-crown rough straws I thought I was stuck with for the season. Like a picture she looked in it—right away three gross he ordered."

"A pretty girl, Aaron."

"Glad enough I am I can give you and her a easy time, mamma—glad enough."

"Like I always say, I ain't got no right to interfere between husband and wife; it's bad enough you got to have with you your old mother."

"Mamma!"

"I ain't got nothin' to say against Gertie, Aaron; she's a beautiful girl, and, like you say, a little temper, when right away she gets over it, don't mean nothin'."

"I was a lucky man, mamma."

"It's just if she'd let me take hold a little, Aaron. Such a waste I see under my own eyes—the lace cover on your bed she don't like me to fold back at nights, so you don't spoil it; grease like Lizzie throws out when in it she's only fried once—it's a shame! A young girl like Gertie don't know them things, Aaron; she has to be learnt."

"Such a little devil she is, mamma—so full of life sometimes I feel like her father."

"Always I save grease from ——"

"Why that girl ain't home yet I don't know. I put on my coat and ——"

"Sh-h-h, Aaron! There she is—sh-h-h, Aaron! That you, Gertie?"

Into the light, like a highly colored butterfly—red fox furs that lay close and warm; red lips and cheeks whipped redder still by the lash of winter—fluttered Mrs. Gertie Shapiro, her quick eyes darting to the clock, explanations bubbling to her lips; and, regarding her with the clemency of Scipio and the myopic eyes of Love, her young husband, rising from his chair, advancing:

"Bad baby, you!"

"Hello, Shap! Gee, you beat me home, didn't you? Hello, ma! Hello, Shap! I was afraid you'd beat me home, hon."

He gathered her to him in an embrace and kissed her fruity lips in their center, where they curved most.

"Shame on you, baby, for staying so late! It ain't nice, honey; and me and mamma was beginning to worry."

She tossed her furs on the sideboard, and her hat, with a spray of fine feathers, and sent the flash of a glance to Mrs. Shapiro sitting placid in her chair beside the window, with features carefully composed to deny any mental travail.

"I—I would 'a' gone to the matinée with ma, Shap, but she herself said I should go with Max and Soph. I would 'a' gone, Shap, even after they said we should go to the rink in Max's new car. A beauty, Shap! If only we had one like it!"

"I told him, Gertie, I didn't want to go to the matinée. The pain in my heart I get like anything when I go to the matinée and come out again in the daylight."

"See? But such a car, Aaron! For six-fifty we ——"

"Sh-h, baby; you know how scared mamma is of 'em."

"I wanted her to go to the matinée, Shap; she was the one who said No."

"Gertie's right, Aaron."

He pinched his wife's cheek, and pinched it again.

"Such a kid! But how, all of a sudden, did that old crowd bob up?"

"A week ago I met Sophie at a matinée, Shap; she invited herself."

"Look! See! Lizzie knows when the big noise in the family comes home; right away she brings supper in. Come; we have supper. Um-m-m! Chops I smell like mamma used to make. Um-lala! Um-lala! Come; on New Year's Eve we have a supper march!"

And, suiting action to words, he linked his mother's fingers in the curve of his arm, suited his stride to the less buoyant stride of rheumatic joints, and drew ruthlessly under his free arm the head of his wife, until her curls lay awry against his sleeve.

"Quit, Shap! Look—and me payin' seventy-five cents for that Marcel wave this very morning! Look! Ain't he the limit? Right away you got to pay me seventy-five cents damages. Ouch, Shap—my favorite spit curl!"

"Aaron! When seventy-five cents Gertie pays to have her hair combed, for such nonsense you shouldn't spoil it. Seventy-five centses don't grow on mulberry trees."

Mrs. Aaron Shapiro shot her parent-in-law the arrow of a glance.

"No; they grow on mulberry bushes."

"Sh-h-h, Gert! Mamma didn't mean anything."

"Then she shouldn't always be ——"

"Sh-h-h, Gert!"

They drew up to the table in silence, except that Mr. Shapiro exhaled a loud sigh of satisfaction.

"Gimme three chops to begin with, Gertie; such a appetite I got."

"The rare ones, Gertie, give to him. Never, when I cooked, rare enough could I get 'em for him."

"I know."

The light clatter of cutlery; the passing hither and thither of dishes; and in and out through the swinging doors a maid, whose feet rose with a sough out of every step of her slippers, and over her checked apron a semi-fresh white one applied.

Mr. Shapiro tussled for a moment with a brittle chop on his plate.

"Always, Gertie dear, tell Lizzie not to cook the chops till just before we sit down. Such chops like these ain't fit, dearie. You ought to taste how mamma used to cook 'em."

"I know, Shap; but Lizzie's new yet. After supper I'll tell her."

"I told her before you came home, children, not to cook them too soon."

Mrs. Aaron Shapiro laid down her knife and fork.

"You wasn't in the kitchen getting her all mixed up, was you, ma?"

"No, no! Not once near the kitchen did I go, Gertie so help me! Only once I called out "

"We should worry, mamma! We should worry, Gert! When my chops ain't rare I'll eat 'em well done—not? Ain't it?"

Gertie Shapiro minced her rose-pink lips together like a bird.

"Grease! That grease stuff again in the cookin'! These potatoes ain't cooked in lard; that's the goose grease that goose-grease stuff!"

"I told Lizzie to use just a little, Gertie; Aaron, he likes it so. To use lard it goes against me when I even smell it! When from the old flat yet I got grease what I rendered from the geese myself—jars of it, Gertie. So grand for cookin' and a cold on the chest! Always with it I used to rub Aaron when a cold on the chest was on him."

"I—ugh!—not on my chest, such stuff! If you'd lemme run my own house once like I want to, ma, I [illegible]"

"Gert!"

"Well, Shap, I can't eat the stuff; I can't even smell it! Ain't I begged and begged her to keep out of the kitchen? I - - Gee! Gimme some of that salad, Shap; I gotta eat somethin'. I - I guess I better bite off my tongue if I wanna stay here!"

"*Ach*, Gertie!"

"Ma ain't going into the kitchen no more, are you, mamma? It's hard for her, Gert, to get used to bein' made a fine lady of. Come; such nonsense we ain't got no time for. Come; we have our dessert right away, quick—we got a big time on to-night."

Light flashed into Mrs. Aaron Shapiro's eyes and the smile swam back into them.

"Such a scheme we got for to-night, Aaron, I ——"

"Pie for dessert, Gert! Pie! The cake, Gert—the cake for mamma, with seventy candles on it, what I told you to order? Bring it on, Lizzie "

"The cake, sir?"

"The cake, Gert? To-night we got a little mamma with seventy candles on her cake *Ach!* Right now I got to get up and kiss her one big kiss for seventy little ones."

And he leaned across the table, with the elk's-tooth fob dangling perilously in his plate, and stamped a long kiss on his mother's cheek.

"You next, Gert—seventy little ones in a big one!"

But Gertie set down her coffee cup suddenly and the blood drained out of her face, bleaching it.

"I—I—honest, Shap, I forgot!"

"It's all right, children; I ——"

"Gee, I—I'm so ashamed! I forgot. On my way to the rink and all, I meant to get out of the auto; but Max and Soph was cuttin' up so I—I just never thought of it till this minute. We can send Lizzie across the street right now to Bingley's for one, Shap; we—I—I ——"

"It's all right, children; enough birthday cakes in my life I've had "

Mr. Shapiro's face was suddenly cold, the cold of tallow, the cold of stale ashes at dawn; his lips quivered and drew back, nor could he control them.

"Shap, I—I can send Lizzie; I—I forgot ——"

"Lizzie!" His voice was like the crack of a whip that, descending, leaves a welt.

"*Ach*, Aaron, will you please be so kind? Don't throw the money away now to buy a cake. When poor papa always had for me a cake it was different; but ——"

"Lizzie!"

"Yes, sir."

"Go across the street to Bingley's. Lizzie, do you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

He tossed a bill on the table and his voice lay carefully within his throat.

"Buy a cake!"

"*Ach*, Aaron! Aaron, my boy!"

"A angel cake; and while you wait they should put on seventy little candles that burn, Lizzie—like they put on birthday cakes."

"Yes, sir."

The slouching of her retreating feet; the slam of a door; the loud ticking of a clock.

"You - you must excuse me, ma; I—I forgot."

"That you should never do anything worse in your life, Gertie!"

"I'm sorry, Shap; I—I couldn't help it. Just like that, it slipped my mind, Shap. Please!"

Her eyes were suddenly bluer behind their film of tears, and even as he regarded her the lines of his face quivered and softened, as though they had broken their conspiracy.

"Three times this morning I reminded you, Gertie! It stabs me like a knife that you forgot *that!* Forgot—her!"

"Please, Shap, don't make me cry. I'm sorry; but don't make me cry. I—I ——"

"Aaron, for my own boy I'm ashamed."

He leaned to his wife and placed his hand over hers.

"It's all right, baby. See, mamma don't care, and I don't care neither. Come; don't cry, baby. It's all right."

"I—you—you're always pickin' on me, Shap; you - "

"Don't cry, Gertie. Aaron don't mean nothin' by it."

"Sh-h-h, baby! You know, lovie, I didn't mean nothin'."

And he kissed her cheek where the tears lay

"I—try—to—do—the—best—I—can. "

"Yes, yes. Sh-h-h!"

"Aaron didn't mean nothin', Gertie."

"No, no; I didn't. There! Dry your eyes, baby. To-night I got a grand surprise. A little surprise party all by ourselves—us three. Box seats I got, Gertie, for the Merry Belles. Just us three—eh, baby? Sh-h-h! Such a little cry-baby! Just us three—eh?"

She looked up out of her lacy trifle of a handkerchief suddenly, and with a little intake of breath.

"To-night! I—why, you—you heard me start to tell you there's goin' to be a crowd at the rink to-night; and I—we promised ——"

"What?"

"All the old gang, Shap, that we—I ain't seen since we're married. Max and Soph, Maurie Bernstein and Ray Borritz, Dave Fineberg and the Goldstein girls, and all that crowd, Shap. I—I told Max and Soph we'd go to—kinda chaperon that crowd of unmarrieds. I—I promised we'd come, Shap."

"For that sporty gang we ain't got time no more, Gertie. I didn't want to say much; but when mamma told me you was out with that Berkovitch crowd I wasn't so glad. A automobile that fellow can afford just so well as our Lizzie! How he gambles on the side I heard enough. All that gang, Gert, them fly models and them city salesmen ain't much. We want a nice, quiet married crowd now, Gert; we ——"

"They was good enough for me when I was workin' myself! I promised we'd come, Shap, and kinda chaperon."

"Chaperon! That's a rich one! Chaperon that crowd! They can chaperon us better."

"We gotta go—just to-night, Shap. To-morrow all day I take mamma round wherever she wants to go; down to the old Grand Street *Schule* in the evenin' if you want it, mamma. They got services. We gotta go just to-night, Shap. There's going to be a real New Year's blow-out and all. Honest, Shap, you oughta seen 'em all sit up and take notice when I got out on my skates this afternoon—you could never tell I was out of practice. I—we gotta go to-night, Shap. I—we promised "

"No, no, Gertie; you telephone Sophie that — "

"We gotta go, Shap. I—I promised."

A sob rose in Gertie's throat that ended in a choke; and Mrs. Shapiro pushed backward her chair and half rose.

"Children! Children, you go! You take Gertie if she wants it, Aaron."

"We're goin' to the theater to-night, Gertie you and me and mamma."

He tossed his napkin in a tumbled heap on the center of the table and rose as though dismissing the subject. A perpendicular furrow lay black between his eyes.

"*Ach*, Aaron, my boy —"

"Sh-h-h, mamma! I'm talking."

"I promised the crowd, Shap."

"We're goin' to the theater to-night; and, for great heaven's sake, Gertie, if you don't want to drive me crazy with your nonsense, don't say no more. Mamma, go get on your bonnet; you, too, Gertie."

His wife regarded him with her lips trembling for composure, and her eyes as hard and wintry as his

"I've promised 'em, Shap."

"She promised 'em, Aaron, my boy Don't be stubborn; she promised 'em."

"Sh-h-h, mamma! You ain't got no put in! I say we're goin' to the theater to-night, and that settles it."

"Ain't I said ——"

"For Max Berkovitch, a fellow what you yourself said was so fresh, you was afraid to work on the same floor with him—for such a nix as him I don't leave my mother on her birthday night."

"That's right! Run down my friends!"

"Enough you've done already to-night, Gertie, to drive me crazy. I can't hold in much longer. We're goin' to the theater to-night. Go get your bonnet, mamma. I say we're goin'!"

"And I say we ain't!"

Scene

"Gert!"

"And I say we ain't!"

"*Ach, mein Gott*, children!"

"I—I ain't! I ain't no kid to be bossed round. She says herself she don't wanna go."

"I wanna go, Gertie; but—but ——"

"If you ain't goin' with me to the rink to-night I—I'm goin' alone. I ain't goin' to spend the first New Year's Eve we're married like a funeral. I promised; and to-morrow I'll take her where she wants. I—I —— Always against me, ain't you? Always with her you side, till—till I—I can't stand it! I—I ——"

"Mamma, go get on your bonnet."

"*Ach*, Gertie, don't get him in a temper All right, Aaron; I—I get on my bonnet."

"Go get on your hat, Gertie. Go get on your hat!"

"I—I—ain't ——"

"Go get on your hat!"

"Hello, Everybody! Say, Ain't You All Good for Sore Eyes!"

The medley of her emotions broke leash at once.

"I ain't goin'! I ain't goin' to be bossed one step out of this house! Oh, I know what's been goin' on round here! I know she's been runnin' me down to you. I smelt the mouse just now when I came in and seen you both touching heads. I know she's been runnin' me down to you; and you're such a mind-cat, whatever she says you you ain't man enough to do what you want to. I know she's been runnin' me down to you. Before I'd be a mind-cat and afraid of my own shadow—if I was a man!"

"You—you take them words back!"

"No, I won't! I ain't goin' to have my whole life dictated to like yours is. I ain't nobody's mind-cat! I know how she's run me down to you without comin' right out and sayin' it. Always preaching extravagance—the way I run my own house; and you ain't man enough to stand up for your own wife! You seen for yourself how for a seventy-five-cent Marcel I had to apologize. You seen for yourself the scene because I slept under the lace cover on my own bed. You and her are always against me. The whole ten months it's been that way—her bossin' this shebang and you afraid not to mind her! I remember how you was afraid in the beginning to even break the news you was married. I remember how she ——"

"Gert! You swallow them words right here before you've had 'em out five minutes! You apologize to my mother for them words. You apologize to my mother for them words or -or I by heaven, I I'll make you!"

His voice rose to a crescendo beyond his control, he was choking and inarticulate; and she receded from him back against the china closet.

"I ain't apologizing for a word; it's all true—only I ain't said enough."

"*Ach*, Gertie, ain't you 'shamed? *Ach*, Gertie!"

"No, I ain't. I'm sick of you and him against me."

"You take back them words, Gertie! You apologize to her!"

"No, I won't! I'm goin' to the rink to-night if I have to go alone. I ain't apologizing; and whatta you goin' to do about it? I'll leave the two of you to run me down behind my back all you want. You stay home and mind her; but I'm sick of the two of you against me. I'm dead sick of it—dead sick!"

She was working into her hat and wraps and furs, breathing heavily between sobs—buckling; buttoning.

"I'm goin' if I gotta go alone. We'll see now if I gotta be bossed and run down behind my back all the time. I'm goin'; and if you don't believe me you watch me!"

"You—you bet you're goin'! You're goin', and quick too! You're goin', or—or swallow them words; and quick too!"

"Watch me—you just watch me! You ——"

"*Ach, Gott in Himmel! My boy! Ach!*"

"Watch me; just you watch—just you ——"

The door slammed on her words; and on Mrs. Shapiro, weak and tottering against the sideboard; and on her son, standing petrified as though he had been struck a blow and died, with the terror of sudden death stamped on his face. And through the swinging doors, in a right merry whirl of air, came Lizzie, a smile on her wide features and balancing in her outstretched hands a bridal white cake, with seventy lighted tapers bending to the draft.

On entering the Crescent Skating Rink the cold and peculiarly aromatic atmosphere of refrigeration rolled out to nip the nose and cloud the breath of the entrant, even before he bought his admission ticket and crossed a wide wooden promenade which led quite suddenly onto a ballroom floor of ice.

All was as though Nature had moved her studio to the habitat of men: An orchestra played behind an artificial cascade cunningly contrived to represent a wild mountain torrent caught in the very moment of leaping highest, and held there in the glittering shackles of ice; the taste of frost in the air; hoar-etchings done in rime on gilt-edged mirrors and crystal balustrades. Truly strange canvases for the artist whose studio is all-outdoors!

Crystal domes of light glittering on ice; skaters, with mufflers flying out straight over one shoulder, skimming, darting, swooping, cutting; the flashing of steel-shod feet; the wild passion of violins from the icebound orchestra; young bloods lunging to their limit, the fine frenzy of sport in their thrust-forward faces; heels flashing backward.

On the wooden promenade at eight o'clock a party gathered in the pleasant buzz and confusion of prearranged meeting. Greetings, handshakes over heads and round backs, each new arrival swelling the buzz and the laughter and the clanking of skates. And so on, with more ado and still more ado until into their midst smiling-lipped Mrs. Aaron Shapiro came, with the red fox fur about her face and eyes that were bluer than ice.

"Well, look who's here!"

"Hello, everybody! Gee, I'm last, ain't I? Hello, everybody!"

"Gertie! Gertie Cohn Shapiro! Well, bless me, if it ain't! Where's Shap? Where's Shapiro? Where's Shap?"

"Hello yourselves—everybody! Say, ain't you all good for sore eyes! Say, it's just like I never quit the business to see you all again. Hello, Ray—Dave—hello!"

"Looka them cheeks! Say, I guess married life ain't been some little tonic for you! Where's Shap, Gert?"

"Quit kiddin', Maurie."

"Happy New Year, Gert!"

"Happy New Year yourself, Alex! Hello, Max!"

"Hello! Swell little night we're goin' to have, with the marrieds of the crowd doing the chaperon act. Where's Shap?"

"He ain't comin', Max. It's his mother's birthday, and—he took her to—to a show. Where's Soph, Max? Aw, ain't that a shame now? And she was fine and dandy this afternoon. I got tonsils myself and know what it is. We pair off even, then, Max, don't we? Both of us are stags. Say, look! Ain't that floor swell? Here, buckle on my skates - quick, Max. Here—ouch! Too tight!"

Mr. Berkovitch smiled upward like a faun, white teeth flashing in his dark, narrow face.

"I guess this ain't my lucky night!"

He bent a slim, high-arched back over Mrs. Shapiro's slim, high-arched foot and let out a hole of skate strap. Above his narrow collar flowed the dusky red of pleasure and exertion.

"Seems like old times, don't it, kiddo?"

"Yes; and I knew you before you was a automobile swell too. What you goin' to do—take the crowd of us out joy-riding to-night?"

"Swell chance in a three-seated runabout! But I'm game to take you out for a spin all by your little self, all-righty."

"Freshie! Same old freshie, ain't you! Didn't I quench you enough this afternoon?"

"Peachie! Same little peachie, ain't you! Gee, this is like old times! Remember the night before you went over to the Shapiro Millinery Company? You and me did an exhibition tango at the fall buyers' dance. Remember? You hadn't even met Shap yet; and you got old man Coblits, of Coblits & Kann, Artificial Flowers, right on the floor with you—just like he wasn't worth half a million!"

"Do I remember!"

"There ain't never been a hat model could touch you, kiddo, since you quit the business. Sophie always said you was a level-headed little kid and you would fix yourself comfortable enough. I gotta hand it to you, Gert."

"Freshie!"

"You was a neat model, all-righty. There was somethin' about your head size, Peachie ——"

"G-e-r-t is the way it's spelled in the dictionary, Max."

"Gert, that could make a thirty-six-dollars-a-dozen toque look like a Paris label!"

"Just the same, when I quit Loeb's and went over to Shapiro's you and the rest of the crowd said I wasn't a good head size and profile anyway, and ——"

"I never did, Gert. You know yourself I was strong for you. Didn't you turn me down and ——"

"Aw, cut that, Max! You never was as serious as a funny paper about it. With your temper and mine we'd have spent the honeymoon in the dog-and-cat hospital."

"I liked your temper, kiddo. I liked to see you flare up like a fire with the gasoline hose turned on it, and then die down and put the fire out with your own briny tears."

"Hurry, Max! Look, the crowd's all on the floor."

"I'm Goin'; and if You Don't Believe Me You Watch Me!"

She rose to her feet, steadying herself with a hold of his coat sleeve; and together they clanked across the wooden floor. Once on the ice, she shot suddenly from his side, bent forward from the waist, with the red fox tippet flying. Careening a great semicircle with the beautiful skill of a gull, he skimmed after her. Captured, she linked her arm with his, tandem; and, matching their easy motion to the rhythm of the orchestra, they cut forward, like two young gods racing with clouds.

"Gee-whillikens!"

"Whoop-see-la!"

"Gee! We ain't forgot how to cut, have we, Max?"

"Forgot! We're the neatest pair on the floor—just like we used to be."

"So!"

"Swoop!"

"Swoop!"

Faster! Faster! And, to steady her, his arms lay round her waist and their heads swayed close. Skaters not so skillful paused to gasp. Members of their party waved to them in high glee; the music gained momentum and carried them with it. The furs at Mrs. Shapiro's neck lay flat-napped, like a fox running in the face of high wind; and in her eyes the artificial brilliancy of footlights, the cold sunshine of the calcium.

"This is sure my lucky night, kiddo!"

"And mine, Max!"

"Shap ain't such a smart husband as he is a business man. A mother he could trust out of his sight; but a live wire of a wife like you—um-m-m!"

"Humph!"

"Huh?"

"Nothin'."

"I'm wise, kiddo."

"Nix you are!"

At intervals they rested at marble-topped tables in the café adjoining, the whole merry party of them. Young men in natty, ready-to-wear suits and with natty ready-to-smile faces. The smooth-jowled new generation of them emerged from the melting pot shaved and boiled down to slick young Americanism. Their backs straight, that had never borne a pack; hands uncalloused, that had never pushed a cart.

Slim young women, whose eyes were bright with the desire to live, and whose forms were not marred by the pangs of too-early motherhood. Trim-waisted daughters, who had never spun flax nor plowed a field.

Ready wine and still more laughter. Miss Ray Borritz smiled across the table and batted her hand toward Mrs. Shapiro and Mr. Berkovitch, attendant at her side.

"It ain't so nice, Max, that you should carry on with the good-lookin' chaperon just because hubby ain't along." (Laughter.) Mrs. Shapiro wafted a kiss to no one in particular.

"How you like me, boys, for a chaperon for your party? I only got eyes in my head to see when they should see." (Laughter.) "When I live in a glass house myself I pull down the shade." (More laughter.)

Mr. Maurie Bernstein, of Bernstein & Fineburg, Ribbon Velvets, sprang suddenly to his feet, and the wine swayed out of his glass into a little pool on the tabletop.

"To our chaperon! To our chaperon, the merry little widow!"

The scraping back of chairs and the pledging of glasses over the center of the table; and above the din Mr. Bernstein's insistent prosit:

"To our chaperon—a swell little looker that only looks when she oughta look! To our chaperon!"

Higher and higher in Mrs. Shapiro's face ran the red; and her eyes, which were bluer than ice, began to thaw.

"Tra-la-la; for I'm the merry widow!"

Mr. Berkovitch reached round her little figure and refilled her glass.

"No fair huggin' the chaperon!"

"All right; if I can't hug her, then I'll pin a medal on her."

And he must stab a blue-and-white celluloid button on her coat lapel, and she read it, squinting, with one eye closed:

"'Loeb Millinery Company—we deliver the goods!' Swell ad, ain't it?"

Miss Ray Borritz caught the refrain and sang upward an air from a current musical comedy, but broke ignominiously.

"Cut it, Ray! You may be a perfect thirty-six, but you can't sing in my opera."

Mrs. Shapiro tugged an engraved gold watch from Mr. Berkovitch's waistcoat pocket and dangled it aloft.

"An hour left of the old year! Come on; let's finish with one grand old skate and meet back here for the big noise."

"Good!"

"Give you leave for ice tango with me, Max."

"Ready!"

(Continued on Page 33)

MR. GREX OF MONTE CARLO

By E. Phillips Oppenheim

ILLUSTRATED BY WILL GREFÉ

XXXIV

THE breaking up of Mr. Grex's luncheon party was the signal for a certain amount of maneuvering on the part of one or two of his guests. Monsieur Douaille, for instance, was anxious to remain the escort of Lady Hunterleys, whose plans for the afternoon he had ascertained were unformed. Mr. Grex was anxious to keep his daughter and Lady Weybourne, whose relationship to Richard Lane he had only just apprehended, apart, while he himself desired a little quiet conversation with Monsieur Douaille before they paid the visit that had been arranged for to the Club and the Casino. In the end Mr. Grex was both successful and unsuccessful. He carried off Monsieur Douaille for a short ride in his automobile, but was forced to leave his daughter and Lady Weybourne alone. Draconmeyer, who had been awaiting his opportunity, remained by Lady Hunterleys' side.

"I wonder," he said, "whether you would step in for a few minutes to see Linda."

She had been looking at the table where her husband and his companion had been seated. Draconmeyer's voice seemed to bring her back to a present not altogether agreeable.

"I am going back to my room for a little time," she replied. "I will call in to see Linda first, if you like."

They left the restaurant together and strolled across the square to the Hôtel de Paris, ascended in the lift, and made their way to Draconmeyer's suite of rooms in a silence that was almost unbroken. When they entered the large saloon with its French windows and balcony they found the apartment deserted. Violet looked questioningly at her companion. He closed the door behind him and nodded.

"Yes," he admitted, "my message was a subterfuge. I have sent Linda over to Mentone with her nurse. She will not be back until late in the afternoon. This is the opportunity for which I have been waiting."

She showed no signs of anger or indeed disturbance of any sort. She laid her tiny white silk parasol upon the table and glanced at him coolly.

"Well," she said, "you have your way then. I am here."

Draconmeyer looked at her long and anxiously. Skilled though he was in physiognomy, closely though he had watched for many months the lights and shades, the emotional changes, in her expression, he was yet at that moment completely puzzled. She was not angry. Her attitude seemed to be in a sense passive. Yet what did passivity mean? Was it resignation, consent, or was it simply the armor of normal resistance in which she had clothed herself? Was he wise, after all, to risk everything? Then as he looked at her, as he realized her close and wonderful presence, he suddenly told himself that it was worth while risking all for the joy of holding her for once in his arms. She had never seemed to him so maddeningly beautiful as at that moment. It was one of the hottest days of the season and she was wearing a gown of white muslin, curiously simple, enhancing somehow or other her fascinating slimness—a slimness that had nothing to do with angularity but possessed its own soft and graceful curves. Her eyes were bluer than gentians. And while his heart was aching and throbbing with doubts and hopes she suddenly smiled at him.

"I am going to sit down," she announced carelessly. "Please say to me without reserve just what is in your mind. It will be better."

She threw herself into a low chair near the window. Her hands were folded in her lap. Her eyes for some reason were fixed upon her wedding ring. Swift to notice even her slightest action, he frowned as he discerned the direction of her gaze.

"Violet," he said, "I think that you are right. I think that the time has come when I must tell you what is in my mind."

She raised her eyebrows slightly at the sound of her Christian name. He moved over and stood by her chair.

"For a good many years," he began slowly, "I have been a man with a purpose. When it first came into my mind—not willingly—its accomplishment seemed utterly hopeless. Still it was there. Strong man though I am, I could not root it out. I waited. There was nothing else to do but wait. From that moment my life was divided. My whole-souled devotion to worldly affairs was severed. I had one dream that was more wonderful to me even than complete success in the great undertaking that brought me to London. That dream was connected with you, Violet."

She moved a little uneasily, as though the repetition of her Christian name grated. This time, however, he was rapt in his subject.

"I won't make excuses," he went on. "You know what Linda is, what she has been for ten years. I have tried to be kind to her. As to love, I never had any. Ours was an alliance between two great moneyed families, arranged for us, acquiesced in by both of us as a matter of course. It seemed to me in those days the most natural and satisfactory form of marriage. I considered myself as others have considered me—a cold, bloodless man of figures and ambition. It is you who have taught me that I have as much sentiment as other men, and perhaps more, a heart and desires that have made life sometimes hell and sometimes paradise. For two years I have struggled. Life with me has been a sort of passionate compromise. For the joy of seeing you sometimes, of listening to you and watching you, I have borne the agony of having you leave me to take your place with another man. You don't quite know what that meant and I am not going to tell you, but always I have hoped and hoped."

"And There Is a Woman's Answer to It"

"And now," she said, looking at him, "I owe you four thousand pounds, and you think perhaps that your time has come to speak."

He shivered as though she had struck him a blow.

"You think," he exclaimed, "that I am a man of pounds, shillings and pence! Is it my fault that you owe me money?"

He snatched her checks from his inner pocket and ripped them in pieces, then lit a match and watched them while they smoldered away. She, too, watched with emotionless face.

"Do you think that I want to buy you?" he demanded. "There, you are free from my money claims! You can leave my room this moment, if you will, and owe me nothing."

She made no movement, yet he was vaguely disturbed by a sense of having made but little progress—a terrible sense of impending failure. His fingers began to tremble, his face was the face of a man stretched upon the rack.

"Perhaps these words of mine were false," he went on. "Perhaps, in a sense, I do want to buy you—buy the little kindnesses that go with affection, buy your kind words, the touch sometimes of your fingers, the pleasant sense of companionship I feel when I am with you. I know how proud you are. I know how virtuous you are. I know that it's there in your blood—the Puritan instinct, the craving for the one man to whom you have given yourself, the involuntary shrinking from the touch of any other. Good women are like that. Mind, in a sense it's narrow; in a sense it's splendid. Listen to me: I don't want to declare war against that instinct. I can't. Perhaps even now I have spoken too soon, craved too soon for the little I do ask. Yet I can keep the seal upon my lips no longer! Don't let us misunderstand each other because we fail to use plain words. All I ask of you is that you shall take from me what makes life brighter for you. I ask for your confidence, for your affection, your companionship. I ask to see you every day that it is possible, to know that you are wearing my gifts, are surrounded by my flowers, and that the rough places in your life are being made smooth by my efforts. I am your suppliant, Violet. I ask only for the crumbs that fall from your table, so long as no other man sits by your side. Violet, can't you give me as much as this?"

His hand, hot and trembling, sought hers, touched and gripped it. She drew her fingers away. It was curious how in those few moments she seemed to be gifted with an immense clear-sightedness. She knew very well that nothing about the man was honest save the passion of which he did not speak. She rose to her feet.

"Well," she said, "I have listened to you very patiently. If I owe any excuse for having appeared to encourage any one of those thoughts of which you speak, here it is. I am like thousands of other women. I absolutely don't know until the time comes what sort of a creature I am, how I shall be moved to act under certain circumstances. I tried to think last night. I couldn't. I felt that I had gone half way. I had taken your money. I had taken it, too, understanding what it means to be in a man's debt. And still I waited. And now I know. I won't even question your sincerity. I won't even suggest that you would not be content with what you ask for ——"

"I have sworn it!" he interrupted hoarsely. "To be your favored friend, to be allowed near you—your guardian, if you will ——"

The words failed him. Something in her face checked his eloquence.

"I can tell you this now and for always," she continued: "I have nothing to give you. What you ask for is just as impossible as though you were to walk into your picture gallery and kneel before your great masterpiece and beg Beatrice herself to step down from the canvas. I began to wonder yesterday," she went on, rising abruptly and moving across the room, "whether I really was that sort of woman. With your money in my pocket and the gambling fever in my pulses I began even to believe it. And now I know that I am not. Good-by, Mr. Draconmeyer. I don't blame you. On the whole perhaps you have behaved quite well. I think that you have chosen to behave well because that wonderful brain of yours told you that it gave you the best chance. That doesn't really matter though."

He took a quick, almost a threatening step toward her. His face was dark with all the passions that had preyed upon the man.

"There is a man's last resource," he muttered thickly.

"And there is a woman's answer to it," she replied, her finger suddenly resting upon a bell in the wall.

They both heard its summons. Footsteps came hurrying along the corridor. Draconmeyer turned his head away, struggling to compose himself. A waiter entered. Lady Hunterleys picked up her parasol and moved toward the door. The man stood on one side with a bow.

"Here is the waiter you rang for, Mr. Draconmeyer," she remarked, looking over her shoulder. "Wasn't it coffee you wanted? Tell Linda I'll hope to see her some time this evening."

She strolled away. The waiter remained patiently upon the threshold.

"Coffee for one or two, sir?" he inquired.

Mr. Draconmeyer struggled for a moment against a torrent of words that scorched his lips. In the end, however, he triumphed.

"For one, with cream," he ordered.

XXXV

SELINGMAN, who was leaning back in a leather-padded chair and smoking a very excellent cigar, looked round at his companions with a smile of complete approval.

"Our host," he declared, bowing to Mr. Grex, "has surpassed himself. For a hired yacht I have seen nothing more magnificent. Excellent wines and cigars, the best of company and an isolation beyond all question. What place could suit us better?"

There was a little murmur of assent. The four men were seated together in the wonderfully decorated saloon of what was beyond doubt a most luxurious yacht. Through the open porthole were visible every few moments, as the

yacht rose and sank on the swell, the long line of lights that fringed the shore between Monte Carlo and Mentone; the mountains beyond, with tiny lights flickering like spangles in a black mantle of darkness; and, farther round still, the stream of light from the Casino reflected far and wide upon the black waters.

"None," Mr. Grex asserted confidently. "We are at least beyond reach of these bungling English spies. There is no further fear of eavesdroppers. We are entirely alone. Each may speak his own mind. There is nothing to be feared in the way of interruption. I trust, Monsieur Douaille, that you appreciate the altered circumstances."

Monsieur Douaille, who was looking very much more at his ease, assented without hesitation.

"I must confess," he agreed, "that the isolation we now enjoy is to a certain extent reassuring. Here we need no longer whisper. One may listen carefully. One may weigh well what is said. Sooner or later it must come to the crucial point. This, if you like, is a game of make-believe. Then in make-believe Germany has offered to restore Alsace and Lorraine, has offered to hold all French territory as sacred, provided France allows her to occupy Calais for one year. What is your object, Herr Selingman? Do you indeed wish to invade England?"

Selingman poured out for himself a glass of wine from the bottle that stood at his elbow.

"Good!" he said. "We have come to plain questions. I'll answer in plain speech. I will tell you now in a few words all that remains to be told. Germany has no desire to invade Great Britain. If one may believe the newspapers, there is scarcely an Englishman alive who would credit this simple fact, but it is nevertheless true. Commercially, England and a certain measure of English prosperity are necessary to Germany. Geographically there are certain risks to be run in an invasion of that country which we do not consider worth while. Besides, an invasion, even a successful one, would result in making an everlasting and bitter enemy of Great Britain. We learned our lesson when we took territory from France. We do not need to repeat it. Several hundred thousands of our most worthy citizens are finding an honest and prosperous living in London. Several thousands of our merchants are in business there, and are prospering. Several hundreds of our shrewdest men of affairs are making fortunes upon the London Stock Exchange. Therefore, we do not wish to conquer England. Commercially that conquest is already effected. I want you, Monsieur Douaille, absolutely to understand this, because it may affect your views. What we do require is to strike a long and lasting blow at the navy of Great Britain. As a somewhat larger Holland, Great Britain is welcome to a peaceful existence. When she lords it over the world, talks of an empire upon which the sun never sets, then the time is at hand when we are forced to interfere. Great Britain has possessions she is not strong enough to hold. Germany is strong enough to wrest them from her, and means to do so. The English fleet must be destroyed. South Africa then will come to Germany, India to Russia, Egypt to France. The rest follows as a matter of course."

"And what is the rest?" Monsieur Douaille asked.

Herr Selingman was no longer content to sit in his place. He rose to his feet. His face had fallen into different lines. His eyes flashed, his words were inspired.

"The rest," he declared, "is the crux of the whole matter. It is the one great and settled goal toward which we who have understood have schemed and fought our way. With the British Navy destroyed the Monroe Doctrine is not worth a sheet of writing paper. South America is Germany's natural heritage by every right worth considering. It is our people's gold that founded the Argentine republic, the brains of our people that control its destinies. Our El Dorado is there, Monsieur Douaille. That is the country which sooner or later Germany must possess. We look nowhere else. We covet no other of our neighbors' possessions. Only I say that the sooner America makes up her mind to the sacrifice, the better. Her Monroe Doctrine is all very well for the Northern States. But when she quotes it as a pretext for keeping Germany from her place in South America she crosses swords with us. Now you know the truth. You know, Monsieur Douaille, what we require from you, and you know your reward."

"There, You are Free From My Money Claims!"

"Our host has already told you, and will tell you again as often as you like, the feeling of his own country. The Franco-Russian alliance is already doomed. It falls to pieces through sheer lack of common interests. The Entente Cordiale is simply a fetter and a dead weight upon you. Monsieur Douaille, I put it to you as a man of common sense: Do you think that you, as a statesman—you see I will put the burden upon your shoulders, because if you choose you can speak for your country—do you think that you have a right to refuse from Germany the return of Alsace and Lorraine? Do you think that you can look your country in the face if you refuse on her behalf the greatest gift that has ever yet been offered to any nation—the gift of Egypt? The old alliances are out of date. The balance of power has shifted. I ask you, Monsieur Douaille, as you value the prosperity and welfare of your country, to weigh what I have said and what our great Russian friend has said word for word. England has made no sacrifices for you. Why should you sacrifice yourself for her?"

Monsieur Douaille stroked his little gray imperial.

"That is well enough," he muttered; "but without the English Navy the balance of power upon the Continent is entirely upset."

"The balance of power only according to the present grouping of interests," Mr. Grex pointed out. "Selingman has shown us how these must change. Frankly, although no one can fail to realize the immense importance of South America as a colonizing center, it is my honest opinion that the nation that scores most by my friend Selingman's plans is not Germany, but France. Think what it means to her. Instead of being a secondary Power she will of her own might absolutely control the Mediterranean. Egypt with its vast possibilities, its ever-elastic boundary, falls to her hand. Malta and Cyprus follow. It is a great price that Germany is prepared to pay."

Monsieur Douaille was silent for several moments. It was obvious that he was deeply impressed.

"This is a matter," he said, "that must be considered from many points of view. Supposing that France were willing to bury the hatchet with Germany, to remain neutral or to place Calais at Germany's disposal. Even then, do you suppose, Herr Selingman, that it would be an easy matter to destroy the British Navy?"

"We have our plans," Selingman declared solemnly. "We know very well that they can be carried out only at great loss both of men and of ships. It is a gloomy and terrible task that lies before us, but at the other end of it is the glory that never fades."

"If America," Douaille remarked, "were to have an inkling of your plan her own fleet would come to the rescue."

"Why should America know of our ultimate aims?" Selingman rejoined. "Her politicians to-day choose to play the part of the ostrich in the desert. They take no account, or profess to take no account, of European happenings. They have no secret service. Their country is governed from within for herself only. As for the rest, the bogie of a German invasion has been flaunted so long in England that few people stop to realize the absolute futility of such a course. London is already colonized by Germans—colonized, that is to say, in urban and money-making fashion. English gold is flowing in a never-ending stream into our country. It would be the most foolish scheme an ambitious statesman could conceive of to lay violent hands upon a land teeming with one's own children. Germany sees farther than this. There are richer prizes across the Atlantic, richer prizes from every point of view."

"You mentioned South Africa," Monsieur Douaille murmured.

Selingman shrugged his shoulders.

"South Africa will make no nation rich," he replied. "Her own people are too stubborn and powerful, too rooted to the soil."

Monsieur Douaille for the first time stretched out his hand and took up the wine-glass that stood by his side. His cheeks were very pale. He had the appearance of a man tortured by conflicting thoughts.

"I should like to ask you, Selingman," he said, "whether you have made any definite plans for your conflict with the British Navy? I admit that the days of England's unique greatness are over. She may not be in a position to-day, as she has been in former years, to fight the world.

"My Father is on That Yacht, and I Cannot Imagine Why He Does Not Return"

At the same time, whatever people may say or think, her one indomitable power is still her navy. Only last month the Cabinet of my country was considering reports from secret agents and placing them side by side with known facts as to the relative strength of your navy and the navy of Great Britain. On paper it would seem that a German success was impossible."

Selingman smiled the smile of one who sees farther than most men.

"Not under the terms I should propose to you, Monsieur Douaille," he declared. "Remember that we should hold Calais, and we should be assured at least of the amiable neutrality of your fleet. We have spoken of matters so intimate that I do not know whether in this absolute privacy I should not be justified in going farther and disclosing to you our whole scheme for an attack upon the English Navy. It would need only an expression of your sympathy with the views we have discussed to induce me to do so."

Monsieur Douaille hesitated for several moments before he replied.

"I am a citizen of France," he said, "an envoy without powers to treat. My one province is to listen."

"But your personal sympathies?" Selingman persisted

"I have sometimes thought," Monsieur Douaille confessed, "that the present grouping of European powers must gradually change. If your country, for instance," he added, turning to Mr. Grex, "indeed embraces the proposals of Herr Selingman, France must of necessity be driven to reconsider her position toward England. The Anglo-Saxon race may have to battle then for its very existence. Yet it is always to be remembered that in the background is the United States of America, possessing resources and wealth greater than those of any other country in the universe."

"And it must also be remembered," Selingman proclaimed in a tone of ponderous conviction, "that she possesses no adequate means of guarding them, that she is not a military nation, that she has not the strength to enforce the Monroe Doctrine. Things were all very well for her before the days of wireless telegraphy, of aëroplanes and airships, of superdreadnoughts and cruisers with the speed of express trains. She was too far away to be concerned in European turmoils. To-day science is annihilating distance. America, leaving out of account altogether her military impotence, would need a fleet three times her present strength to enforce the Monroe Doctrine for the remainder, not of this century, but of this decade."

Then the bomb fell. A strange voice suddenly interposed, a voice the American accent of which seemed more marked than usual. The four men turned their heads. Selingman sprang to his feet. Mr. Grex's face was marble in its whiteness. Monsieur Douaille, with a nervous sweep of his right arm, sent his glass crashing to the floor. They all looked in the same direction, up to the little music gallery. Leaning over in a careless attitude, with his arms folded upon the rail, was Richard Lane.

"Say," he begged, "may I take a hand in this little discussion?"

XXXVI

OF THE four men Selingman was the first to recover himself.

"Who the hell are you and how did you get up there?" he roared.

"I am Richard Lane," the young man explained affably, "and there's a way up from the music room. You probably didn't notice it. And there's a way down, as you may perceive," he added, pointing to the spiral staircase. "I'll join you if I may."

There was a dead silence as for a moment Richard disappeared and was seen immediately afterward descending the round staircase. Mr. Grex touched Selingman on the arm and whispered in his ear. Selingman nodded. There were evil things in the faces of both men as Lane approached them.

"Will you kindly explain at once your presence here, sir?" Mr. Grex ordered.

"I say!" Richard protested. "A joke's a joke, but when you ask a man to explain his presence on his own boat you're coming it just a little thick, eh? To tell you the truth, I had some sort of an idea of asking you the same question."

"What do you mean—your own boat?" Draconmeyer demanded.

He was, perhaps, the first to realize the situation. Richard thrust his hands into his pockets and sat upon the edge of the table.

"Seems to me," he remarked, "that you gentlemen have made some sort of a mistake. Where do you think you are anyway?"

"On board Schwann's yacht, the Christabel," Selingman replied.

Richard shook his head.

"Not a bit of it,' he assured them. "This is the steam yacht Minnehaha, which brought me over from New York and of which I am most assuredly the owner. Now I come to think of it," he went on, "there was another yacht leaving the harbor at the same time. Can't have happened that you boarded the wrong boat, eh?"

Mr. Grex was icily calm, but there was menace of the most dangerous sort in his look and manner.

"Nothing of that sort was possible," he declared, "as you are, without doubt, perfectly well aware. It appears to me that this is a deliberate plot. The yacht I and my friends thought we were boarding to-night was the Christabel, which my servant had instructions to hire from Schwann of Monaco. I await some explanation from you, sir, as to your purpose in sending your pinnace to the landing stage of the Villa Mimosa and deliberately misleading us as to our destination."

"Well, I don't know that I've got much to say about that," Richard replied easily.

"You are offering us no explanation?" Selingman demanded.

"None," Richard assented coolly.

Selingman suddenly struck the table with his clenched fist.

"You were not alone up in that gallery!"

"Getting warm, aren't you?" Richard murmured.

Selingman turned to Grex.

"This young man is Hunterleys' friend. They've fixed this up between them. Listen!"

A door slammed above their heads. Some one had left the music gallery.

"Hunterleys himself!" Selingman cried.

"Sure!" Richard assented. "Bright fellow, Selingman," he continued amiably. "I wouldn't try that on, if I were you," he added, turning to Mr. Grex, whose hand was slowly stealing from the back of his coat. "That sort of thing doesn't do nowadays. Revolvers belong to the last decade of intrigue. You're a bit out of date with that little weapon. Don't be foolish. I am not angry with any of you. I am willing to take this little joke pleasantly, but ——"

He raised a whistle to his lips and blew it. The door at the farther end of the saloon was opened as though by magic. A steward in the yacht's uniform appeared. From outside was visible a very formidable line of sailors. Grex, with a swift gesture, slipped something back into his pocket, something that glittered like silver.

"Serve some champagne, Reynolds," Richard ordered the steward who had come hurrying in, "and bring some cigars."

The man withdrew. Richard seated himself once more upon the table, clasping one knee.

"Look here," he said, "I'll be frank with you. I came into this little affair for the sake of a pal. It was only by accident that I found my way up yonder—more to look after him than for any other reason. I never imagined that you would have anything to say that was interesting to me. Seems I was wrong though. You've got things very nicely worked out, Mr. Selingman."

Selingman glared at the young man, but said nothing. The others, too, were all remarkably bereft of words.

"Don't mind my staying for a little chat, do you?" Richard continued pleasantly. "You see I am an American, and I am rather interested in the latter portion of what you had to say. I dare say you're quite right in some respects. We are a trifle too commercial and a trifle too cocksure. You see things have always gone our way. All the same we've got the stuff, you know. Just consider this: If I thought there was any real need for it—and I begin to think that perhaps there may be—I should be ready to present the United States with a dreadnought to-morrow, and I don't know that I should need to retrench as a result of doing so. And," he went on, "there are thirty or forty others who could and would do the same. Tidy little fleet we should soon have, you see, without a penny of taxation. Of course I know we should need the men, but we've a grand reserve to draw upon in the West. They are not bothering about the navy in times of peace, but they'd stream into it fast enough if there were any real need."

The chief steward appeared, followed by two or three of his subordinates. A tray of wine was placed upon the table. Bottles were opened, but no one made any attempt to drink. Richard filled his own glass.

"Prefer your own wine?" he remarked. "Well, now, that's too bad. Hope I'm not boring you?"

No one spoke or moved. Richard settled himself a little more comfortably upon the table.

"Just Consider This: If I Thought There Was Any Real Need for It, I Should be Ready to Present the United States With a Dreadnought To-morrow"

"I can't tell you all," he proceeded, "how interested I have been, listening up there. You seem to possess quite a gift of putting things clearly, if I may be allowed to say so, Mr. Selingman. Now here's my reply, as one of the poor Anglo-Saxons from the West who've got to make room in the best parts of the world for your German colonists: If you make a move in the game you've been talking so glibly about, if my word counts for anything, if my persuasions count for anything—and I've facts to go on, you know—you'll have the American fleet to deal with as well as the English, and I fancy that will be a trifle more than you can chew up, eh?

"I'm going back to America a little earlier than I anticipated. Of course they'll laugh at me at first in Washington. They don't believe much in these round-table conferences and European plots. But all the same I've got some friends there. We'll try to remember this amiable little statement of policy of yours, Mr. Selingman. Nothing like being warned, you know."

Mr. Grex rose from his place.

"Sir," he said, "since we have been and still are your unwilling guests, will you be so good as to arrange for us at once to relieve you of our presence?"

"Well, I'm not so sure about that," Richard remarked meditatively. "I think I'd contribute a good deal to the comfort and happiness of this generation if I took you all out to sea and dropped you overboard one by one."

"As I presume you have no such intention," Mr. Grex persisted, "I repeat that we should be glad to be allowed to land."

Richard abandoned his indolent posture and stood facing them.

"You came on board, gentlemen, without my invitation," he reminded them. "You will leave my ship when I choose—and that," he added, "is not just at present."

"Do you mean that we are to consider ourselves your prisoners?" Draconmeyer asked with an acid smile.

"Certainly not—my guests," Richard replied with a bow. "I can assure you that it will be a matter of only a few hours."

Monsieur Douaille hammered the table with his fist.

"Young man," he exclaimed, "I leave with you! I insist upon it that I be permitted to leave. I am not a party to this conference. I am merely a guest, a listener, here wholly in my private capacity. I will not be associated with whatever political scandal may arise from this affair. I demand permission to leave at once."

"Seems to me there's something in what you say," Richard admitted. "Very well, you may come along. I dare say Hunterleys will be glad to have a chat with you. As for the rest of you," he concluded as Monsieur Douaille rose promptly to his feet, "I have a little business to arrange on land which I think I could manage better while you are at sea. I shall therefore, gentlemen, wish you good evening. Pray consider my yacht entirely at your disposal. My stewards will be only too happy to execute any orders—supper, breakfast or dinner. You have merely to say the word."

He started toward the door, closely followed by Douaille, who in a state of great excitement refused to listen to Selingman's entreaties.

"No, no!" the former objected, shaking his head. "I will not stay. I will not be associated with this meeting. You are bunglers, all of you. I came only to listen, on your solemn assurance of entire secrecy. We are spied upon at the Villa Mimosa, we are made fools of on board this yacht. No more unofficial meetings for me!"

"Quite right, old fellow," Richard declared as they passed out on to the deck. "Set of wrong 'uns, those chaps, even though Mr. Grex is a grand duke. You know Sir Henry Hunterleys, don't you?"

Hunterleys came forward from the gangway, at the foot of which the pinnace was waiting.

"We are taking Monsieur Douaille ashore," Richard explained as the two men shook hands. "He really doesn't belong to that gang and he wants to cut adrift. You understand my orders exactly, captain?" he asked as they stepped down the iron gangway.

"Perfectly, sir," was the prompt reply. "You may rely upon me. I am afraid they are beginning to make a noise downstairs already!"

The little pinnace shot out—a stream of light across the dark, placid sea. Douaille was talking earnestly to Hunterleys.

"Pleasantest few minutes I ever spent in my life," Richard murmured as he took out his cigarette case.

XXXVII

THE sun was shining brilliantly and the sky was cloudless as Richard turned his automobile into the grounds of the Villa Mimosa soon after nine o'clock on the following morning.

The yellow-blossomed trees, slightly stirred by the west wind, formed a golden arch across the winding avenue. The air was sweet, almost faint with perfume. On the terrace, holding a pair of field glasses in her hands and gazing intently out to sea, was Fedora. At the sound of the motor horn she turned quickly. She looked at the visitor in surprise. A shade of pink was in her face. Lane brought the car to a standstill, jumped out and climbed the steps of the terrace.

"What has brought you here?" she asked in surprise.

(Continued on Page 30)

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Wasteful Competition

THE opening of the Panama Canal has subjected railroads to the most serious competition of recent years. Rates by way of the canal are so much lower than by rail that the boats draw shipments destined for the Pacific Coast from points far west of the Atlantic Seaboard. The great question is whether the roads shall meet this competition by lowering transcontinental rates.

Those rates are already exceptionally low. Probably they yield no profit to the rail carriers—in which case still lower rates would, of course, result in outright loss; and if the roads do a certain business at a loss when some other agency could do it at a profit the net result is economic loss to the country.

Finally, the country cannot afford to have railroad capital unprofitably employed. Everybody would see the folly of building a horse-car line to compete with a trolley line when the latter could do business profitably at rates that would be ruinous to the former. People would say: "To build this line is simply to throw away so much capital." There must be a similar waste of capital if railroads haul freight at a loss in order to keep the business away from ships that could haul it at a profit.

It is true that transcontinental business cannot be sharply set aside from the roads' other business, and that shipments which repay only the direct out-of-pocket expenses—or even fail to do that—may, on a broad view, be really profitable by keeping equipment employed that would otherwise lie idle, and so on. But it seems doubtful that decidedly lower transcontinental rates would, on the broadest view, be profitable, and there is no permanent gain in competition which brings loss to the competitors.

Never Enough

PROBABLY the book most quoted in the English-speaking world of late is Friedrich von Bernhardi's Germany and the Next War, expounding the doctrine of the right and the duty of a growing nation to make war. The book is drawn on to prove that, with so truculent a spirit abroad, this country ought to arm for her own protection; but our militarists overlook the point that Bernhardi wrote the volume as a solemn warning to his countrymen against their dangerous unpreparedness for war.

Germany, with her immense army and rapidly expanding navy, seemed to us the type of a militarist state when Bernhardi wrote, three years ago. To him she seemed quite different. Her pindling navy he views with alarm. True, the army is large, but he questions the spirit that animates and directs it. Formerly, he says, the Germans were the most warlike people of Europe, by which virtue they attained their present lofty position; but of late—through love of ease and of philosophic speculations and by absorption in the sordid business of making money—they have degenerated into a peace-loving nation. "A rude shock is needed to awaken their warlike instincts"—which shock he proceeds to administer.

There you have the logical completion of the militarist program. A nation may pile dreadnought on dreadnought, and train the whole male population to arms; but all that is nothing unless she keeps her warlike instincts alive by fighting. For national security, army corps and battleships are of little account unless you have the warlike spirit that is nourished by war. No matter to what length you go in accumulating all the instruments of war, that is not enough unless you keep them efficient by using them.

Bernhardi is the best exponent of militarism. If you accept his premises you can hardly avoid his conclusions.

Tinkering the Constitution

NEW YORK has elected one hundred and sixty-eight delegates to the Constitutional Convention that will meet at Albany next spring to recast the organic law. We do not expect much from their labors. For years the Empire State has been one of the worst-governed commonwealths in the Union. Disclosures of public works badly constructed and public institutions badly run have been a standing feature of her political history. The legislature has supplied a major scandal about every other session. Each revelation of inefficiency, waste, graft and undemocratic ring control has been met with the cry: "We must elect better men next time."

Now and then better men are elected, and there is a comparatively clean page—only comparatively. In any other field of human endeavor a machine which functioned so badly so much of the time would give rise to a profound suspicion that it was ill suited for the work and never could be depended on to function properly. And the New York government is only a little better or a little worse than that of forty-odd other states.

That good government, especially for a state having the immense and complex interests of New York, can ever come from a numerous legislature, which will inevitably be composed mostly of men of little weight, experience or ability—each of whom, moreover, thinks first of the interests of the petty district that elected him, or the interests of the dominant political clique in that district—seems to us clearly impossible. Several notorious court decisions that blocked social progress show another constitutional defect.

The framers of the Federal Constitution practically disregarded the organic law that then existed and struck out on new work. Their success might—after a century and a quarter of the most extraordinary social and economic development in history—inspire present-day constitution makers with more courage.

A Difference

THERE are some great paintings in New York, belonging to the Morgan collection, which, according to current report, will be offered for sale as soon as times are once more propitious for the marketing of such baubles. We could imagine France so impoverished by war taxes that she hardly knew where her next meal was coming from, but still striving mightily—by mortgaging the cookstove, pawning the bedstead and selling her shoes—to scrape together a few hundred thousand dollars for a pick of those canvases. On the other hand we could not imagine the United States—even with a bursting treasury—buying those pictures at a dollar a yard.

This profound national difference suggests that any great nation may cherish its own greatness without disparaging the greatness of another nation.

A Great Gain

BANKS are rapidly retiring—or have already retired—the clearing-house loan certificates issued in August, and in all probability we have seen the last of that unique American device for meeting a financial crisis.

Heretofore every sharp shock to confidence has put a deadlock on bank credit. Now every bank with sound assets in the form of commercial paper can always convert those assets into currency by rediscounting the paper at a Federal Reserve Bank; so no solvent bank need fear a sudden drain on its cash. No sound merchant need fear that he will be unable to borrow for his actual needs, because his paper is always convertible into money.

This is a great gain for the country. No credit system can be panic-proof, as Europe discovered when this war-earthquake happened; but against a collapse of credit from any such causes as those of 1893 or 1907 we should now be secure—which is worth more to the nation than all the battleships that ever have been constructed.

Unemployment

EVERY commercial country has a banking reserve—a certain large sum in gold that is set apart and lies untouched from month to month and year to year in ordinary times, but which may be drawn on in an emergency. Thus, in the war crisis gold that may have lain unmoved for a long period passed out of the Bank of England.

We believe it would be possible for a country to create an industrial reserve. Every important nation's labor statistics show a pretty constant recurrence of unemployment. For three or four years labor may be quite fully employed. Then business slackens and the number of men out of work rises until times improve. These recurring seasons of large unemployment take a heavy toll of labor. Savings disappear; debts accumulate; families formerly self-supporting become dependent.

As a matter of fact we know the dull seasons are going to recur, because they always have. In every country there is a vast deal of public work done by the cities, states and central governments. In every country the public employs labor most freely exactly when private employers do—that is, when times are good and credit is easy. When times are poor and bonds not easily salable the public cuts down employment. It ought to be the other way. By intelligent forethought it might be made so—public work, that is, might be made a sort of industrial reserve to fall back on when private work slackened.

Big Business

THERE is no fundamental difference between big business and little business except in size. The sound country bank is run on exactly the same principles as the biggest bank in Wall Street. The Steel Corporation or the International Harvester Company is essentially just the village hardware store magnified a million diameters.

Profit is the motive of all business, and the quest is as keen in little business as in big. The dividing line between good business and bad business has no relation whatever to the line between big and little. On both sides of the latter line you will find integrity and fairness, or chicanery and oppression.

The important superficial difference is that big business is most subject to criticism and most often called to account. It tends, therefore, to become consciously charged with a certain public interest and to become socially educated. The so-called welfare work for the health and recreation of employees, in which nearly all big businesses engage more or less extensively, is a result.

It is not that big business is more sinful than little business, but that its sins may be more readily discovered.

Murder as a Pastime

CHICAGO counts up one hundred and eighty-odd murders in the year 1914. A very recent case painfully suggests that murder is still a professional occupation in New York. Roughly speaking, as to statistics of crime those cities differ from other American towns only in proportion to their size. No other country that can be called civilized has any such record.

Various profound reasons for this national disgrace have been adduced; but the actual reason, in our opinion, is very simple and lies right on the surface: By making the criminal law a game we make murder a pastime. Every sloppy-minded jury that acquits a murderer under the unwritten law, or liberates a female homicide because of her sex, helps to advertise that it is safe to kill.

Every murder trial that is only a protracted and theatrical contest of wits between opposing counsel, and every successful technical appeal, helps to broaden and deepen the general impression that a man with blood visible on his hands can play a game of checkers with the law under conditions that give him an advantage.

We do not expect any improvement in our murder record until our method of dealing with murder is improved. This is a political subject, since improvement can come only through political action; but it is almost impossible to get politics interested in subjects of immediate, tangible and indubitable importance. You can stir up no end of political interest in a topic such as whether one man ought to be a director of two railroads; but a propaganda to discourage murder addresses itself mostly to empty benches.

Peace Before a Year Passes

THE German Crown Prince is quoted as saying: "Undoubtedly this is the most stupid, senseless, unnecessary war of modern times." Undoubtedly every one of the belligerents will agree with him in that—each, however, claiming, as he does, that somebody else was responsible for it. Undoubtedly this war has sickened the whole world, including those engaged in it, as no other war ever did.

There are differences of opinion as to who is responsible, but the reaction of civilized men from its monstrous cruelties and wastes is almost universal. So we do not believe it will last a year. No matter what the fortunes of the battlefield are, a cumulative load of disgust and abhorrence and a steadily increasing economic pressure will stop it. If the situation of the first week of December could have been foreseen in the last week of July, if European chancelleries could have had at the former date the same consciousness of what war means that they had at the latter date, there would certainly have been no war.

In the first days, of course, they all talked about dying in the last ditch, as everybody does when he begins a fight; but after half a dozen kicks in the stomach any belligerent begins to comprehend the beauties of peace.

THE BLIGHT

By Melville Davisson Post

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER NEWELL

WHY is it one writer or one magazine becomes greatly popular while others never obtain any considerable hearing?

A writer like Poe is universally read. The imitators of Poe, Conan Doyle, and the like, continue to enjoy great popularity, while our most conspicuous modern writers, claiming an elevated literary standard, remain with their pages uncut.

Certain magazines published in this country run swiftly into a circulation of millions, while others, long established, are barely able to find a few hundred thousand readers. Those of the first class become great and powerful; those of the second fall into decay.

The explanation does not lie wholly in the superior energy and business ability of the one as against the other. It would scarcely do to affirm that the popularity of Poe and Doyle arose from a superior skill in advertising.

It is a complete answer to say that these authors and these popular magazines give the public what it wants. And here one reaches a vital interest—confining the inquiry to fiction: What is it the public does want?

The reader is not looking for any form of instruction. If he wishes information in this day he goes to a textbook. The primary object of all fiction is to entertain the reader. If, while it entertains, it also ennobles him this fiction becomes a work of art; but its primary business must be to entertain and not to educate or instruct him.

These latter benefits are incidental. They can never be the direct object of fiction. Nor must it appear that the intent of fiction is to ennoble the reader. All attempted uplift is instinctively resented. Did not Thoreau say that if he should hear that one was coming to his house to do him good he would flee as for his life? The great primary object, then, in all fiction is to entertain.

What sort of fiction is it that has the most nearly universal appeal?

If one reflects one will immediately see that the human mind everywhere is engaged almost exclusively with problems. It is the problem that holds the mind with a consuming interest. The astronomer, as Mr. Lowell so aptly puts it, is merely a detective of the heavens; the chemist, a detective of the laboratory; the biologist, a student of clews. We are encircled by a frontier of vast mysteries. We advance by finding the solutions to these mysteries.

False Ideals in Modern Letters

THE human mind is essentially an implement for the solving of problems and the untangling of mysteries. This being true, it would seem to be also true that the writer who presents a problem to be solved or a mystery to be untangled will be offering those qualities in his fiction which are of the most nearly universal appeal.

Immediately one meets the reply that literature of this character is not of the highest order. Writers and magazine publishers who avoid these elements of universal interest, we are told, are dealing with a higher type of literature.

This idea has been very deeply rooted. It has happened that certain men who had the public attention—men of culture, of education and refinement—have taken this position. They have inspired the textbooks taught in the schools and thereby given this theory wide credence. It has also happened that the mystery or problem story, from the very fact that it contained elements of the most nearly universal appeal, has been the vehicle usually chosen by the unskillful. This has given such fiction a general air of inferiority.

Persons of refinement and culture wish to distinguish themselves by producing something unlike that produced by the incompetent.

Thus it has happened in this country that a few men, commanding the older and more established publications, have, in a measure, created the impression that the absence of the problem or mystery in a work of fiction is in some sense a distinguishing mark of the elevated literary class.

The result was that the writers and magazines who adopted this course lost their audience and restricted themselves to a narrow hearing. It was a tremendous loss; and, unless they gained something of a superior value—markedly and conspicuously superior—the thing was suicidal.

Pride and the desire to be distinguished are not enough to justify a magazine in moving toward bankruptcy or an author toward a single edition. These men must be certain that the fiction which omits the problem or mystery is superior to that which contains it; and their case must be established beyond all doubt to justify the enormous losses it entails—losses of money and of popularity.

It is not an answer to cite Mr. Galsworthy's story of the popular author who was urged by a critic to write "literature," and who continued to write better and better "literature," omitting the elements of popular appeal, until he finally produced a piece so excellent that not even the critic could read it! Nor can we dodge it with the single comment:

"I do not know whether the gentlemen of this school have any talent, for I cannot read their books; but I do know there has been no genius in this country since Edgar Allan Poe."

With the possible exception of Hawthorne, there has been no genius in this country since Edgar Allan Poe; but men of ability and talent may produce literature in the absence of genius, and it is with the literature produced by these men that we are primarily concerned.

Let us inquire into the statement that the highest order of literature omits the problem or mystery.

High-standing names count for much; but a high-standing name that produces literature omitting the problem or mystery will not take precedence over an equally high-standing name which discusses literature with no air of special pleading.

In the fifth century before the Christian era there flourished along the Ægean Sea a race of people that not only produced works of art but, what is far more extraordinary, were able to say precisely how works of art ought to be produced.

Few of the records of this golden civilization have descended to us, but enough have come down to demonstrate that no subsequent civilization compares with it, in either artistic feeling or the products of it.

This great people pointed out that a work of art in literature could not be merely a representation of life. "It is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen. . . . The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with meter no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen."

When Aristotle, in his Poetics, undertook to lay down the principles by which tragedy ought to be constructed he gave the common and essential principles for the construction of all fiction—especially for the construction of the short story.

The doctrines of the Poetics and its rules are fundamental.

They deal with the elements at the basis of all fiction that would be considered a work of art. They are especially applicable to that brief form of fiction which we call the short story, and which we seek to make a work of art in our day.

Under the Scheme of the Universe It Is the Tragic Things That Seem the Most Real

In spite of all books that have been written in our modern languages on the subject, we do not find anyone who is able to tell us how to make the short story a work of art. A few men seem to know how to do it, but they are unwilling or unable to tell us how they go about the thing.

Aristotle, however, in his Poetics, does tell us. He lays down the rules. He does not slur over any difficulty. He points out precisely how such a work of art ought to be constructed; in fact, how it must be constructed. He is the greatest authority we know, of the greatest age we know. And if high-standing names count for anything we have a right to say we are going to the one above all others. Aristotle begins his great essay by taking a position directly contrary to those who tell us that the highest form of literature omits the problem or mystery—that is to say, has no distinctive plot.

The Great Painters Began With the Most Careful and Accurate Drawings of the Picture They Intended to Paint

Rules Laid Down by One Who Knew

"FOR Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. Now, character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character; character comes in as subsidiary to the actions. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all. Again, without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character. . . .

"Again, if you string together a set of speeches expressive of character, and well finished in point of diction and thought, you will not produce the essential tragic effect nearly so well as with a play which, however deficient in these respects, yet has a plot and artistically constructed incidents. Besides which, the most powerful elements of emotional interest in Tragedy—Peripeteia, or Reversal of the Situation, and Recognition Scenes—are parts of the plot. A further proof is that novices in the art attain finish of diction and precision of portraiture before they can construct the plot. It is the same with almost all the early poets.

"The Plot, then, is the first principle and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy: Character holds the second place. A similar fact is seen in painting. The most beautiful colors, laid on confusedly, will not give as much pleasure as the chalk outline of a portrait."

It seems, then, that the age of the very highest artistic conception held a theory adverse to those of our own age who claim the most elevated literary standard.

It must not be imagined that Aristotle was writing an arbitrary treatise on literature, or formulating rules out of

(Continued on Page 25)

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MERCANTILE AGENCIES

How They Can Help the Local Business Man

By ROGER W. BABSON

DO YOU know why men often shake hands after a trade? If you are not acquainted with the origin of this custom you will be interested to learn how it came to enter into our everyday life. Back in the early days barter constituted the only method of trading, and both parties had with them the commodities they intended to swap.

As neither the Indian nor the trader gave up his wares until the other fellow did likewise, no credit system was necessary. Moreover, as both men's hands were fully occupied holding skins, beads or other articles, there was no opportunity for either to draw a knife or a tomahawk.

As trade became more extensive and the Indians were unable to bring their wares with them, some sign was needed to signify whether they were coming to fight or to trade.

At this point the shaking of hands was developed to signify trade, for with hands clasped both traders were unable to draw a knife. Hence, with the arrival of the day when a man shook hands to assure himself that the other man did not contemplate murder, there began the foundation of a new business era. Thus it will be seen that the shaking of hands was the origin of the credit movement. Now let me tell you how it has developed.

A long period of evolution ensued, until finally there was attained a great achievement, on which is founded the entire business structure of the world. I refer to credit, without which we should be as the aborigines in the days of old. It was a long and tedious process; but commercial relations became so extensive and complex that some radical change was absolutely necessary. The growth and extent of trade, both domestic and foreign, made the old system unendurable.

At first it was difficult to learn what was needed; but the patient was finally diagnosed as needing credit. Though the credit methods first employed were crude, yet they were suitable for those days. Moreover, the great credit structure of the business world to-day is but a development of the original plan, frail as it was.

The ultimate outcome was the foundation of central mercantile agencies, the sole functions of which were to compile and distribute reports—for private subscription and circulation—on the business acumen, integrity and resources of individuals, firms and corporations. Primarily and, indeed, up to the present time, these reports have been utilized almost entirely by the larger commercial interests for both getting and giving credit.

This means that the smaller business men have neglected a golden opportunity. Therefore I earnestly urge every local business man to learn more about mercantile agencies, especially concerning their value and adaptation to his work.

To begin with, the primary advantage of having a rating by a reputable mercantile agency is the additional credit afforded thereby. If you are a humbug it will not help you to have such a fact spread broadcast; but if you are an honest man a published statement of that fact must be to your benefit.

The jobbing interests, from which retail distributors buy their goods, give credit information about themselves to mercantile agencies, and if the jobber is not too proud to do so certainly the small merchant should not object.

Sauce for the Gander

Notice of the refusal of a small business man to give a few facts concerning his business is always forwarded to the party who instigates an inquiry. Readers must not think they are injuring in any way the mercantile agency by refusing to grant an interview to a reporter. Quite the contrary. A mercantile agency is, in fact, an agent working for the jobber or manufacturer who requests it to procure credit information concerning the local business man. Few jobbers or manufacturers will sell goods to a man who will not let those of whom he buys know whether or not he can pay for the goods. No careful retail merchant will extend credit to a customer he does not know. Why should the jobber do differently? What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Of course the retail merchant does not ask for a statement from his customers; but that is generally because he knows them personally. We should remember that the jobber has not the advantage of such a personal acquaintance. The uses, therefore, are as outlined above. The abuses are really quite negligible.

Moreover, agencies are, practically speaking, unbiased. Their functions are to collect and distribute accurate information about the individuals or companies they are requested to investigate. As their income ultimately depends on their accuracy they earnestly strive to be fair. It is of no advantage to them to distribute partisan information, because they have no ax to grind. They are public servants and their only stock in trade is to serve their clients to the best of their ability.

How the Agencies Work

It may be supposed by some readers that it is possible to beat an agency at its own game and give an inflated statement. Do not fool yourself, however, by supposing that a mercantile agency depends entirely for its rating and reports on what a business man tells it of himself.

Quite the contrary. The statement supplied by a business man is but the starting point. The man is then carefully looked up through intimates and business acquaintances of his home town, through the firms from whom he purchases, supplemented by trade opinions, which may be as extensive as the inquirer wishes.

The methods employed by agencies are somewhat as follows: An inquiry comes to a branch office of the mercantile agency about you, for instance, in some distant city. This inquiry is at once directed through the central office to a reporter located in the same territory where you, concerning whom the information is desired, live. The reporter makes a personal call on you and endeavors to procure the information requested by the inquirer. In addition he asks certain stock questions, of which I shall speak later and which all agencies always ask. Should you live in a locality not covered by an agency reporter, the information is solicited by mail.

After the reporter has received all the information you will give him, he goes for whatever other information he may gather to friends, business men and bankers located in your town or city.

Furthermore, information is asked of out-of-town dealers with whom you trade. One point I want to emphasize here is that a mercantile agency always gets some information about every person it looks up; so it behooves every one to provide first-hand as much information as he can safely afford to give.

I will now speak of the two forms most commonly used by mercantile agencies. One form is used in case information is solicited concerning an individual or members of a partnership firm; and the other, if information is desired of an incorporated company.

The blanks to be filled in by an individual or a partner in a firm are briefly as follows: Name; address; kind of business; age; married or single; statement of failures; assets; liabilities; mortgage indebtedness; insurance; references, and so on. The blanks to be filled in by a corporation call for the corporate name; date and locality of incorporation; officers and directors, capitalization, assets; liabilities; dividend record; all forms of indebtedness; insurance; other interests of directors, and trade references.

I give below a sample form similar to that used by one of the principal agencies when seeking information concerning an individual or a partner in a firm.

On the Financial Condition of
Location _____ County of _____ State of
From Inventory of _____ 19 Business
Dated _____ 19

Full names of all partners:
_____ Age _____ Married or single
_____ Age _____ Married or single
_____ Age _____ Married or single
_____ Age _____ Married or single

How long in business here?
Whom do you succeed, if any one?
Where from, town and state?
Former occupation?
Ever fail? _____ If so, when and where?

ASSETS*

Merchandise on hand at cash value	$
Outstanding accounts at realizable value	
Bills receivable, notes, and so on, at realizable value	
Cash on hand	
Cash in bank	
Machinery, furniture and fixtures	
Other personal assets consisting of	
Total Assets	$

LIABILITIES*

For merchandise not due	$
For merchandise past due	
Loans from bank	
Loans from friends or relatives	
Chattel mortgage	
Other obligations, consisting of	
Total Liabilities	$
Surplus	$

REAL ESTATE—Describe, locate and value separately and in whose name held

Total value of real estate	$
Mortgages, or amount unpaid thereon	
Equity in real estate	$
Total worth in and out of business—according to purchasing figures	$

Do you borrow on accounts receivable?
If any of above accounts are pledged state amount $ _____
Ever suffer fire loss? _____
If so, where and when? _____
Did fire originate on your premises?
Insurance on merchandise $ _____ On real estate $
Annual business amounts to $ _____ Bank with
Give names and locations of houses from which largest purchases are made:

Sign here full name of firm

References

By whom signed—member of firm

*Where no figures are entered, use the word none.

The above form will give readers a very good idea of what questions an agency asks; so I will confine my remarks to the most important points the small business man should know.

The assets of an individual and a firm vary; but they may usually be listed under these nine headings: Merchandise; Notes Receivable; Accounts Receivable; Cash in Bank; Cash on Hand; Machinery and Plant; Furniture and Fixtures; Real Estate; Personal and Other Property.

The principal elements, however, that credit departments of jobbing houses, wholesalers and manufacturers consider are those having the greatest degree of tangibility, such as cash, accounts and bills receivable, merchandise and real estate. These are arranged in the order of their customary relative value. If the real estate is mortgaged the equity alone is considered.

As great stress is laid on a firm's latest inventory, I earnestly urge every local business man to keep his inventory up to date. This is what I mean: We will suppose that hats are purchased at ten dollars a dozen; if the price at the time of inventory is twelve dollars a dozen the merchandise should be listed on the inventory slip at cost—namely, ten dollars. On the other hand, if the wholesale price at the time of inventory has declined to eight dollars a dozen the merchandise should be listed at eight dollars, and not at cost.

Dead stock, especially, should not be carried on the inventory sheet at too high a value, because credit men are usually keen enough to draw a decisive line between active and dead stock. When the reporter of a mercantile agency goes into your store he takes in at a glance whether you are a live merchant with a live stock or a dead one with a dead stock.

Accounts and Bills Receivable should be carefully scrutinized before being submitted for rating. In almost every bills-receivable account there are some individual items that are not collectible. Due allowance should be made for such and the agency should be so informed. Unless a dealer admits it credit men will make some deduction of their own accord, and it will usually be too large.

Machinery and Plant, and Furniture and Fixtures raise neither the hopes nor the rating of a credit man. Your machinery and plant are of value only so long as they are in operation. If from competition, business reverses, or some other cause, the plant shuts down, how much can be realized on it? It is from this standpoint your credit is based.

The same reasoning applies to Furniture and Fixtures. A local merchant or manufacturer may put all his money into elaborate fixtures when plain, ordinary fixtures would be just as efficient. Take, for example, an ice-cream establishment or a drug store which puts in an elaborate individual soda-fountain equipment. The fact that a dealer has a two-thousand-dollar soda distributor does not give him that much additional credit over a competitor who has a two-hundred-dollar fountain. The only way to get rid of such a fixture is to sacrifice it at auction. The fountain manufacturer will not buy it back, for he is in the business of selling and not buying.

Real Estate Assets

Of course standard equipment and standard machines of universal use will always have some convertibility. A drug store, however, that puts a given amount of money into stock will get a much higher rating than a dealer who puts the same amount into fixtures and equipment.

Real Estate, so far as the small merchant is concerned, is of questionable value for credit purposes. Indeed, a great many credit men disregard it entirely. Moreover, if real estate is mortgaged credit men attach very little if any value to the equity behind it. Hence real estate is considered a very slow asset at best.

Personal assets depend largely on each individual case. If the personal assets of an individual consist solely of his business, or of some other business of like kind, he will be given a smaller rating than if his surplus funds were in another kind of business, especially if long-established and with a high percentage of goodwill.

Now turn to the liability column. A great many credit men look at the liability column of a statement before they look at any other item. Under this heading the following nine items are embodied: Merchandise bills not due; merchandise bills due; loans from banks; loans from friends or relatives; salaries, wages, and so on, clerks and other employees; money left on deposit; chattel mortgages; mortgages on plant, machinery, and so on; all other forms of indebtedness.

Another question asked by some agencies is: How much, if any, of the above indebtedness is past due?

As with assets there are some features on which credit men lay the greatest stress.

These are merchandise carried in open account; notes and accounts payable; and mortgage indebtedness, if any.

My advice to the local business man, therefore, is to have the principal items in the liability column incorporated under these three headings—and preferably under the first two. In other words, do away with mortgage indebtedness as much as possible.

My readers will note that goodwill, patents, trade-marks, and so on, have no place in a credit man's schedule of assets; and, after all, what does goodwill amount to? Suppose a dealer has been in a certain locality for a great many years; then suppose a competing store starts in the next block and advertises: No Shopworn Goods!

There is not much sentiment in business; and, to the extent that a competing firm may take away the business of an established firm, readers can see that goodwill is not of sufficient value to be considered under a credit man's schedule of assets.

Briefly, the local business man can secure the highest rating by having under Assets a good, live merchandise account, collectible accounts and bills receivable, cash and unmortgaged real estate; and under Liabilities a minimum amount of merchandise in open-account notes, as few accounts payable as possible, and very little mortgage indebtedness.

I will now turn to the answers solicited from an incorporated company. In the first place the name of the corporation must not sound too much like that of another corporation. If the name is similar to another, and there is in any way a possibility of an injunction or any legal trouble, the credit rating will be correspondingly lower, according to—shall I call it the daring of the incorporators?

The nature and location of the business have much to do with a favorable rating. If there are a great many merchants similarly engaged due allowance must be made, as the fewer there are engaged in a business, the greater will be the rating in proportion. For instance, a shoe dealer will get a larger amount of credit in a town where there are few shoe dealers and no shoe manufacturer than if located in a town where he would have a lot of competition.

The state in which the company is incorporated comes in for its own share of importance. A company incorporated in a state that is a mother of corporations may receive smaller credit consideration than a company incorporated in a state where the incorporation requirements are severe and more costly. In the same way the item calling for the predecessor, if any, is not to be overlooked. It makes a great difference whether a company succeeds a paying or a bankrupt concern.

The list of officers and directors is always carefully scrutinized. More and more are credits expanded or contracted on the personnel of a company's management or directorate. It is, therefore, to the advantage of every local business to have at its head men of sterling character and habits—men whose integrity and business acumen are proved and unquestionable.

Capital is always an important factor. The credit man judges whether or not for each particular line of business it is excessive; whether it is paid in full; the proportionate amounts of common and preferred stock; where the control lies, and so on. The method by which stock is paid—whether in cash, patents, trade-marks, patterns, goodwill, or other property—also has its own individual credit value. Credit men always insist on knowing of what each classification consists and the value attributed thereto by the owners.

As an additional check, data concerning the other interests and pursuits of the board of management are invaluable. Moreover, the merchant seeking credit is asked for trade references, especially from the jobbers, wholesalers or manufacturers from whom he purchases his goods.

Referring to forms, I will speak of some points that must be answered by all. Information is sought as to the amount of annual business; overhead expense; dividend record; annual surplus accounts; indebtedness to owners; insurance on merchandise and raw materials; insurance on buildings, plants and interior fixtures; depreciation and allowance; and methods of charging off.

The mercantile agencies, after they have collected sufficient information, issue periodically a rating book, which is loaned to subscribers for a nominal sum. In this rating book there are the names of a majority of the mercantile interests of our country; and, in accordance with a table of credits given in the first part of the book, the subscriber may, by looking at the key numbers opposite a name, ascertain the estimated wealth and credit-standing of any person whose name is given in the book.

Direct information is also secured on such factors as character and business record—whether a man is temperate, economical, businesslike, progressive, inclined to speculate; facts as to his business ability, failures, methods of paying—whether fair or slow; whether capital is invested as a result of his own industry or inherited; liens; indebtedness; suits or judgments; kind of business; fire losses, and so on.

Of course it is to one's benefit to be able to make as strong a statement as possible. Whenever you buy goods, especially from a new concern, or give an extra large order to a "regular," it helps you to secure the advantage of a lower price if the jobber knows you are "good." Most large concerns rely on a central agency; and when a representative thereof calls on you do not be secretive or show the reporter the door, but, on the contrary, give him an honest, frank statement, playing up as strongly as possible the points I have emphasized.

The central agency is out to get information about you, and, as I have stated, it is much better for you that it shall get the information first-hand; in fact, if you refuse to give a reputable agency the information sought you may wake up some day to find that your credit has been contracted, and that you can buy no more goods except for cash.

In closing I quote from a letter one of the largest agencies sends when asking for information:

"It is claimed that the tendency of business is toward direct dealings between producer and consumer; and, if true, the farmer participates in this movement. And as his business relations extend beyond the home market his credit position becomes the subject of commercial inquiry. Credit is founded on confidence, and that on knowledge as to character, capital and ability.

"Believing you wish to keep pace with the times, and in order that you may be properly represented, you are invited to answer the questions on this blank and return it to us in the stamped envelope inclosed for that purpose.

"This agency is the recognized repository for information concerning every class of business, which is accumulated for the purpose of furnishing subscribers with data on which to determine the propriety of granting credit. Should it not be convenient to fill out the inclosed form, or if you do not wish to do so, we shall be pleased to hear from you to that effect."

Let me say Amen! to this advice.

The next time the representative of a mercantile agency calls on you and begins to pry into your business, do not get mad, but answer his questions pleasantly.

THE BLIGHT

(Continued from Page 21)

his head, as we say. His statements are merely the result of the accumulated experiences of a highly intellectual age. He was undertaking to arrange and formulate the structural rules that the observation of all literary people of his time had justified.

It was the opinion of those men that the plot was the most important feature of any literary composition pretending to be a work of art and undertaking to move the emotions of the people; and so they were accustomed to say that the poet was a maker of plots rather than of verses.

The greatest attention was given to the construction of the plot. The other features of the composition were taken up after that. The plot, as Aristotle says, was considered to be the soul of the thing, and unless a good plot were constructed it was of no use to go farther. Mere delineation of character would never make a work of art; nor could it be made a work of art by any strength or beauty of diction. It was like undertaking to weave a tapestry without first having a design or to put beautiful colors on a canvas without first having the outline of the picture drawn in.

Nothing could have so astonished the literary men of that age as this idea of our own—that the highest form of literary structure may omit the framework of the plot and be merely a fragment of life or the delineation of character.

Short Stories Like Plays

Authorities of that age, like Aristotle, would have pointed out at once that to omit a carefully prepared plot would be to destroy or omit the machinery by which the interest of the people was held and their emotions moved. It would be to omit the two most powerful elements of all human interest—surprise and the orderly evolution of tragic incident, for in the moving of all events it is the possibility of surprise that holds the mind, and it is the evolution of tragic incident that moves the emotions.

That this great authority of the most intellectual age of the world was speaking of the drama, and especially of tragedy, does not disturb the truth of this position. He was dealing with a form of literature intended to interest and move the people, and we, also, are speaking of precisely that.

Writers of the short story in this age are endeavoring to do with it precisely what the Greeks in their age were attempting to do with the drama—that is to say, we are endeavoring to interest and move the people by a piece of literature complete in itself and able to be grasped at a single sitting.

The slightest reflection would make it clear to anybody that those qualities which cause the reader to follow a story through to the end, and to be moved by it, are precisely the same qualities that cause an auditor to sit through a play and be moved by it. There must be a surprise somewhere in the thing, and there must be an orderly evolution of incident—in other words, a problem or mystery to be unraveled, and virile incident to move the public to either fear or pity.

The short story or the play may do these things, either strongly and with great effect, or mildly and with slight effect; but if it is to have any effect whatever it must in some degree present these elements. It may be comedy; but, if so, it will be better if it contains the element of surprise in its structure, and if it also moves us in some degree to either fear or pity.

The highest form of the short story will be found to run parallel with the highest form of the play, in that both require a carefully constructed plot, including the element of surprise and an orderly evolution of tragic incident.

"As to that poetic imitation which is narrative in form . . . the plot manifestly ought, as in a tragedy, to be constructed on dramatic principles. It should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle and an end. It will thus resemble a single and coherent organism, and produce the pleasure proper to it.

"It will differ in structure from historical compositions, which of necessity present not a single action but a single period, and all that happened within that period to one person or to many, little connected together as the events may be. For as the sea fight at Salamis and the battle with the Carthaginians in Sicily took place at the same time, but did not tend to any one result, so, in the sequence of events, one thing sometimes follows another, and yet no single result is thereby produced."

If we take the highest form of literature, as the Greeks took it, to be that which will hold the interest of an intelligent public to the closest attention and move its emotions to the greatest degree, then our fiction, on which we depend for this effect, must have the strongest plot, including the element of surprise and the most virile tragic incidents we can assemble.

The reason why a plot of the first order must contain a problem or mystery—that is to say, something to unravel—is that the mind may be led step by step to the surprise. And the surprise is the end we are after.

The reason tragic incidents must be assembled is because the human mind is more moved by tragic incident than by any other. If we would move men in the greatest degree it is tragic incident we must use. Under the scheme of the universe it is the tragic things that seem the most real. Things pleasing and comfortable do not strike us with the same emotions of fear and pity as do things terrible and tragic. Moreover, as Taine says, we must deal with tragic incidents to produce our greatest effects, because it is the tragic incident that epitomizes life.

The age that produced the greatest works of art, and also wrote down for us precisely how those works of art ought to be constructed, gave the first and greatest attention to the structure of the plot. If one stops to reflect one will see that there must always be what one would call a plot even in the mildest form of the short story. Even in what one calls "a fragment of life" or "a human document," it must be; for nothing in life is complete. Things happen there, as Maupassant pointed out, always on the same plane, and the sequence of events there does not tend to a unity of result.

A work of art cannot be a mere segment of either Nature or life. It must be a completed thing—a unity. It must have a beginning, a middle and an end. We must be satisfied with it, when it is finished, as a complete thing in itself. It cannot be a fragment, only to be understood by being joined to other fragments. A work of art cannot be a leaf torn out of a storybook; it cannot be a strip slashed out of a tapestry; it cannot be a segment cut out of a picture. It must be a whole story—a whole tapestry—a whole picture.

Therefore, no matter what one may pretend, or what refined and elevated work one may assume, one cannot produce any work of art in fiction except by assembling elements and constructing something that is complete in itself.

One must have a plan of some character to begin with. If one would weave a tapestry one must have a design; if one would paint a picture one must first have a drawing; and if one would write a story one must have a plot or skeleton structure into which to put one's incidents.

It would be a strange doctrine that advised a tapestry weaver to go ahead without a design, or a painter to go ahead without a sketch or drawing; as well advise an architect to build his house without a plan or a contractor to build a railroad without a survey.

If one will go into the Louvre, in Paris, or into any good art gallery, and examine the unfinished work of the great painters, one will find they began with the most careful and accurate drawings of the picture they intended to paint. If one takes down any great short story one will find it to be built on a plan equally as laboriously constructed. The reader does not usually see this, as he does not see the painstaking drawings behind the picture; but, nevertheless, it is there.

Men Who Lose the World's Ear

It is a matter of profound regret that men of talent and culture in this country have got the idea, in order to distinguish themselves from the common run of writers, they must avoid the very elements essential to the highest form of literature. Because surprise in the plot and virile incident have the widest appeal, and are therefore usually undertaken by the unskillful, these men have determined to avoid them altogether.

Alas! In doing so they abandon the highest forms of literature. Their publications, holding to this theory, must give up the whole people and confine themselves to a narrow circle of readers; and such writers must give up the whole people as readers of their works and be content with the few who are of like opinion with themselves.

This is a great loss. The people lose the benefit of these men of advanced learning and culture, and these men lose the ear of the world. One may claim to have so much refinement that one ceases to be a factor in great affairs; and lesser men, who are not afraid to take hold of the realities of life, come in and supplant one.

In spite of every pretense the orator wishes to have a large audience, and the writer desires to have the whole people read his work. One may shut oneself up and pretend that the opinion of the world does not concern one; but one deceives oneself.

Meredith, when he was dying, lamented because the English people did not read his books. It was his own fault. He chose an involved and unnatural style, in which things were purposely made difficult to understand rather than easy; and he suffered from it. He did not lack plot and tragic incident, but his peculiarities became more marked as he grew older and his style more involved and difficult.

Long before him, Doctor Johnson pointed out that nothing unusual survives. Before him was the great example of King James' translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, showing how literature can always be simple, noble and of the highest order and yet plain to everybody. Chrysippus was an involved writer, as in our day is Mr. Henry James; and Epictetus said of him:

"When some one may exalt himself, in that he is able to understand and expound the works of Chrysippus, say then to thyself: 'If Chrysippus had not written obscurely this man would have had nothing whereon to exalt himself.'"

If one points out the excellences of a work produced by men who do not believe in plot and tragic incident, he must remember, if these men do so well with literature of their kind, how wonderfully they would have done if they had dealt with the highest form of the short story. It is a fine thing to have the learning, the culture and the talent of these men; but it is an ill thing to put this ability to the delineation of trifling things, lacking elements of universal interest.

If the unskillful, with a rough plot and badly assembled incidents, can get a hearing, these men, with skillful plots and properly assembled incidents, could reach and move the whole people. They would be a great force in our literature. They would be moving factors in our civilization. Their publications would flourish and their editions would be read by everybody.

The basic element in the taste of the public is correct. The demand of the human mind for mystery or problem something to unravel—is universal. It is the desire of everybody to know how persons will act in tragic situations; how men of individuality and power in high places will conduct themselves under certain conditions of stress. We shall never cease to be interested in these things, and the author who presents them to us will have our attention.

It has, therefore, happened in this country that the men who have had the foresight and courage to give the reading public these universal elements of interest in their fiction have built up great and prosperous publications, while those who have denied the public these elements of interest have fallen into bankruptcy.

Resolute editors, refusing to be influenced by the pretensions of the smaller dilettante class, have been able to run the circulation of their periodicals into incredible figures.

They have foreseen—what the great Greeks so conclusively knew—that a piece of fiction, to interest the whole people, must have a plot containing surprises, and must be elaborated by virile incident. They have not been afraid to seek and encourage fiction of this character.

They have seen that fiction containing these elements, even though badly done, was of more interest to the people than excellently drawn character studies that do not get anywhere, or faithful portraiture of life that lacks unity and completeness.

These men would be glad if the fiction containing the organic elements of interest were better done. They would be glad to have faithful portraiture of life and excellent characterization in these stories, combined with the basic elements of universal interest; for if they had they would have not only the highest type but also the literature of widest appeal.

It is not in the hands of the cloistered professor of English, nor yet in the embalmed pages of the exclusive magazine pretending to have an elevated standard, that the future of our literature lies, but across the knees of the men who are going to the whole people with their publications.

These men are dealing with to-day. They are handling what Taine called the "hot vitals of life." They will not be bound by any Chinese veneration of old precedents. They will reject the exaggerated imagery of the Elizabethan Age as readily as the inanities of the Victorian, and as readily the complacent instructions of the newest British novelist.

Nor will they be bound by the excessive suppressions of a sterile dilettantism. They will insist that the language shall become clear, direct and virile, and that those who write must have a story in their heads to tell.

THE RED GLUTTON

(Continued from Page 7)

or three box cars of prisoners, with the doors locked and armed guards riding upon the roofs; then two or three shabby, misused passenger coaches, containing injured officers and sometimes injured commonsoldiers, too, if there was a lack of accommodation; and then, stretching off down the rails, a long string of box cars, each of which would be bedded with straw and would contain for furniture a few rough wooden benches ranging from side to side. And each car would contain ten or fifteen or twenty, or even a greater number, of sick and crippled men.

Those who could sit were upon the hard benches, elbow to elbow, packed snugly in. Those who were too weak to sit sprawled upon the straw and often had barely room in which to turn over, so closely were they bestowed. It had been days since they had started back from the field hospitals where they had had their first-aid treatment. They had moved by sluggish stages with long halts in between. Always the wounded must wait upon the sidings while the troop trains from home sped down the cleared main line to the smoking front; that was the merciless but necessary rule. The man who got himself crippled, became an obstacle to further progress, a drag upon the wheels of the machine; whereas the man who was yet whole and fit was the man whom the generals wanted. So the fresh grist for the mill was expedited upon its way to the hoppers; that which already had been ground up was relatively of the smallest consequence.

Rough-and-Ready Surgery

Because of this law, which might not be broken or amended, these wounded men would, perforce, spend several days aboard train before they could expect to reach the base hospitals upon German soil, Maubeuge being at considerably less than midway of the distance between starting point and probable destination. Altogether the trip might last a week or even two weeks—a trip that ordinarily would have lasted less than twelve hours. Through it these men, who were messed and mangled in every imaginable fashion, would wallow in the dirty matted straw, with nothing except that thin layer of covering between them and the car floors that jolted and jerked beneath them. We knew it and they knew it, and there was nothing to be done. Their wounds would fester and be hot with fever. Their clotted bandages would clot still more and grow stiffer and harder with each dragging hour. Those who lacked overcoats and blankets—and some there were who lacked both—would half freeze at night. For food they would have slops dished up for them at such stopping places as this present one, and they would slake their thirst on water drawn from contaminated wayside wells and be glad of the chance. Gangrene would come, and blood poison, and all manner of corruption. Tetanus would assuredly claim its toll. Indeed, these horrors were already at work among them. I do not tell it to sicken my reader, but because I think I should tell it that he may have a fuller conception of what this fashionable institution of war means—we could smell this train, as we could smell all the trains which followed after it, when it was yet fifty yards away from us.

Be it remembered, furthermore, that no surgeon accompanied this living freightage, that not even a qualified nurse traveled with it. According to the classifying processes of those in authority on the battle lines these men were lightly wounded men, and it was presumed that while en route they would be competent to minister to themselves and to each other. Under the grading system employed by the chief surgeons a man, who was still all in one piece and who probably would not break apart in transit, was designated as being lightly wounded. This statement is no attempt upon my part to indulge in levity concerning the most frightful situation I have encountered in nearly twenty years of active newspaper work; it is the sober, unexaggerated truth. And so these lightly wounded men—men with their jaws shot away, men with holes in their breasts and their abdomens, men with their spine tips splintered, men with their arms and legs broken, men with their hands and feet shredded by shrapnel, men with their scalps ripped open, men with their noses and their ears and their fingers and toes gone, men jarred to the very marrow of their bones by explosives—these men, for whom ordinarily soft beds would have been provided and expert care and special food, were rolled up alongside that noisome station; and, through the door openings from where they were housed like beasts, they looked out at us with the dumb glazed eyes of suffering beasts.

As the little toylike European cars halted, bumping together hard, orderlies went running down the train bearing buckets of soup, and of coffee and drinking water, and loaves of the heavy, dark German bread. Behind them went other men—bull-necked strong men picked for this job because of their strength. Their task was to bring back in their arms or upon their shoulders such men as were past walking. There were no stretchers. There was no time for stretchers. Behind this train would be another one just like it and behind that one another, and so on down an eighty-mile stretch of dolorous way. And this, mind you, was but one of three lines carrying out of France and Belgium into Germany victims of the war to be made well again in order that they might return and once more be fed as tidbits into the maw of that war; it was but one of a dozen or more such streams, threading back from as many battle zones to the countries engaged in this wide and ardent scheme of extermination.

Half a minute after the train stopped a procession was moving toward us, made up of men who had wriggled down or who had been eased down out of the cars, and who were coming to the converted buffet room for help. Mostly they came afoot, sometimes holding on to one another for mutual support. Perhaps one in five was borne bodily by an orderly. He might be hunched in the orderly's arms like a weary child, or he might be traveling upon the orderly's back, pack-fashion, with his arms gripped about the bearer's neck; and then, in such a case, the pair of them, with the white hollow face of the wounded man nodding above the sweated red face of the other, became a monstrosity with two heads and one pair of legs.

Here, advancing toward us with the gait of a doddering grandsire, would be a boy in his teens, bent double and clutching his middle with both hands. Here would be a man whose hand had been smashed, and from beyond the rude swathings of cotton his fingers protruded stiffly and were so congested and swollen they looked like fat red plantains. Here was a man whose feet were damaged. He had a crutch made of a spade handle. Next would be a man with a hole in his neck, and the bandages had pulled away from about his throat, showing the raw inflamed hole. In this parade I saw a French infantryman aided along by a captured Zouave on one side and on the other by a German sentry who swung his loaded carbine in his free hand. Behind them I saw an awful nightmare of a man—a man whose face and bare cropped head and hands and shoes were all of a livid, poisonous, green cast. A shell of some new and particularly devilish variety had burst near him and the fumes which it generated in bursting had dyed him green. Every man would have, tied about his neck or to one of his buttonholes, the German field-doctor's card telling of the nature of his hurt and the place where he had sustained it; and the uniform of nearly every one would be discolored with dried bloodmarks, and where the coat gaped open you saw that the stiff, white cambric lining was made stiffer still by long, brownish-red streakings.

In at the door of the improvised hospital filed the parade, and the wounded men dropped on the floor or else were lowered upon chairs and tables and cots—anywhere that there was space for them to huddle up or stretch out. And then the overworked surgeons, French and German, and the German nursing sisters and certain of the orderlies would fall to. There was no time for the finer, daintier proceedings that might have spared the sufferers some measure of their agony. It was cut away the old bandage, pull off the filthy cotton, dab with antiseptics what was beneath, pour iodine or diluted acid upon the bare and shrinking tissues, perhaps do that with the knife or probe which must be done where incipient mortification had set in, clap on fresh cotton, wind a strip of cloth over it, pin it in place and send this man away to be fed—providing he could eat; then turn to the next poor wretch. The first man was out of that place almost before the last man was in; that was how fast the work went forward.

One special horror was spared: The patients made no outcry. They gritted their teeth and writhed where they lay, but none shrieked out. Indeed, neither here nor at any of the other places where I saw wounded men did we hear that chorus of moans and shrieks with which fiction always has invested such scenes. Those newly struck seemed stunned into silence; those who had had time to recover from the first shock of being hit appeared to be buoyed and sustained by a stoic quality which lifted them, mute and calm, above the call of tortured nerves and torn flesh. Those who were delirious might call out; those who were conscious locked their lips and were steadfast. In all our experience I came upon just two men in their senses who gave way at all. One was a boy of nineteen or twenty, in a field hospital near Rheims, whose kneecap had been smashed. He sat up on his bed, rocking his body and crying fretfully like an infant. He had been doing that for days, a nurse told us, but whether he cried because of his suffering or at the thought of going through life with a stiffened leg she did not know. The other was here at Maubeuge. I helped hold his right arm steady while a surgeon took the bandages off his hand. When the wrapping came away a shattered finger came with it—it had rotted off, if you want to know that detail—and at the sight the victim uttered growling, rasping, animal-like sounds. Even so, I think it was the thing he saw more than the pain of it that overcame him; the pain he could have endured. He had been enduring it for days.

A Giant's Fortitude

I particularly remember one other man who was brought in off this first train. He was a young giant. For certain the old father of Frederick the Great would have had him in his regiment of Grenadier Guards. Well, for that matter, he was a grenadier in the employ of the same family now. He hobbled in under his own motive power and leaned against the wall until the first flurry was over. Then, at a nod from one of the shirt-sleeved surgeons, he stretched himself upon a bare wooden table which had just been vacated and indicated that he wanted relief for his leg—which leg, I recall, was incased in a rude, splintlike arrangement of plaited straw. The surgeon took off the straw and the packing beneath it. The giant had a hole right through his knee, from side to side, and the flesh all about it was horribly swollen and purplish-black. So the surgeon soused the joint, wound and all, with iodine; the youth meanwhile staring blandly up at the ceiling with his arms crossed on his wide breast. I was right by him, looking into his face, and he didn't so much as bat an eyelid. But he didn't offer to get up when the surgeon was done with treating him. He turned laboriously over on his face, pulling his shirt free from his body as he did so, and then we saw that he had a long, infected gash from a glancing bullet across the small of his back.

He had been lying on one angry wound while the other was being redressed. You marveled, not that he had endured it without blenching, but that he had endured it at all.

The train stayed with us perhaps half an hour, and in that half hour at least a hundred men must have had treatment of sorts. A signal sounded and the orderlies lifted up the few wasted specters who still remained and toted them out. Almost the

last man to be borne away was injured in both legs; an orderly carried him in his arms. Seeing the need of haste the orderly sought to heave his burden aboard the nearest car. The men in that car protested; already their space was overcrowded. So the patient orderly staggered down the train until he found the crippled soldier's rightful place and thrust him into the straw just as the wheels began to turn. As the cars, gathering speed, rolled by us we could see that nearly all the travelers were feeding themselves from pannikins of the bull-meat stew. Wrappings on their hands and sometimes about their faces made them doubly awkward, and the hot tallowy mess spilt in spattering streams upon them and upon the straw under them.

They were on their way. At the end of another twenty-four-hour stretch they might have traveled fifty or sixty or even seventy miles. The place they left behind them was in worse case than before. Grease spattered the earth; the floor of the buffet room was ankle deep, literally, in discarded bandages and blood-stiffened cotton; and the nurses and the doctors and the helpers dropped down in the midst of it all to snatch a few precious minutes of rest before the next caravan of misery arrived. There was no need to tell them of its coming; they knew. All through that afternoon and night, and through the next day and night, and through the half of the third day that we stayed on in Maubeuge, the trains came back. They came ten minutes apart, twenty minutes apart, an hour apart, but rarely more than an hour would elapse between arrivals. And this traffic in marred and mutilated humanity had been going on for four weeks and would go on for nobody knew how many weeks more. No doubt it still goes on, nor will there be any relief from it until midwinter stops the heavy fighting.

When the train had creaked out of sight beyond the first turn to the eastward I spoke to the head surgeon of the German contingent—a broad, bearded, middle-aged man who sat on a baggage truck while an orderly poured a mixture of water and antiseptics over his soiled hands.

"A lot of those poor devils will die?" I suggested.

"Less than three per cent of those who get back to the base hospitals will die," he said with a snap of his jaw, as though challenging me to doubt the statement. "That is the wonder of this war—that so many are killed in the fighting and that so few die who get back out of it alive. These modern scientific bullets, these civilized bullets"—he laughed in self-derision at the use of the word—"they are cruel and yet they are merciful too. If they do not kill you outright they have a little way, somehow, of not killing you at all."

Suffering for a Smoke

"But the bayonet wounds and the saber wounds?" I said. "How about them?"

"I have been here since the very first," he said; "since the day after our troops took this town, and God knows how many thousands of wounded men—Germans, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Turcos, some Belgians—have passed through my hands; but as yet I have to see a man who has been wounded by a saber or a lance. I saw one bayonet wound yesterday or the day before. The man had fallen on his own bayonet and driven it into his side. Shrapnel wounds? Yes. Wounds from fragments of bombs? Again, yes. Bullet wounds? I can't tell you how many of those I have seen, but surely many thousands. But no bayonet wounds. This is a war of hot lead, not of cold steel. I read of these bayonet charges, but I do not believe that many of those stories are true."

I didn't believe it either.

The train which followed after the first, coming up out of France, furnished for us much the same sights the first one had furnished, and so, with some slight variations, did the third train and the fourth and all the rest of them. The station became a sty where before it had been only a kennel; the flies multiplied; the stenches increased in volume and strength, if such were possible; the windows of the littered waiting room, with their cracked half panes, were like ribald eyes winking at the living afflictions which continually trailed past them.

A train came, whose occupants were nearly all wounded by shrapnel. Wounds of the head, the face and the neck abounded among these men—for the shells, exploding in the air above where they crouched in their trenches, had bespattered them with iron pebbles. Each individual picture of suffering recurred with such monotonous and regular frequency that after an hour or so it took something that was out of the common run—an especially vivid splash of daubed and crimson horror—to quicken our imaginations and make us fetch out our note books. I recall a young lieutenant of Uhlans who had been wounded in the breast by fragments of a grenade, which likewise had smashed in several of his ribs. He proudly fingered his newly acquired Iron Cross while the surgeon relaced his battered torso with strips of gauze. Afterward he asked me for a cigar, providing I had one to spare, saying he had not tasted tobacco for a week and was perishing for a smoke. We began to take note then how the wounded men watched us as we puffed at our cigars, and we realized they were dumbly envying us each mouthful of smoke. So we sent our chauffeur to the public market with orders to buy all the cigars he could find on sale there. He presently returned with the front and rear seats of the automobile piled high with bundled sheaves of the brown weed you can get an astonishingly vast number of those domestic French cigars for the equivalent of fifteen dollars in American money—and we turned the whole cargo over to the head nurse on condition that, until the supply was exhausted, she give a cigar to every hurt soldier who might crave one, regardless of his nationality. She cried as she thanked us for the small charity.

"We can feed them—yes," she said, "but we have nothing to give them to smoke, and it is very hard on them."

The Sheffield Sergeant's Story

A little later a train arrived which brought three carloads of French prisoners and one carload of English. Among the Frenchmen were many Alpine Rangers, so called—the first men we had seen of this wing of the service—and by reason of their dark blue uniforms and their flat blue caps they looked more like sailors than soldiers. At first we took them for sailors. There were thirty-four of the Englishmen, being all that were left of a company of the West Yorkshire Regiment of infantry. Confinement for days in a bare box car, with not even water to wash their faces and hands in, had not altogether robbed them of a certain trim alertness which seems to belong to the British fighting man. Their puttees were snugly reefed about their shanks and their khaki tunics buttoned to their throats.

We talked with them. They wanted to know if they had reached Germany yet, and when we told them that they were not out of France and had all of Belgium still to traverse, they groaned their dismay in chorus.

"We've 'ad a very 'ard time of it, sir," said a spokesman, who wore sergeant's stripes on his sleeves and who told us he came from Sheffield. "Seventeen hours we were in the trench, under fire all the time, with water up to our middles and nothing to eat. We were 'olding the center and when the Frenchies fell back they didn't give our chaps no warning, and pretty soon the Dutchmen they 'ad us flanked both sides and we 'ad to quit. But we didn't quit until we'd lost all but one of our officers and a good 'alf of our men."

"Where was this?" one of us asked.

"Don't know, sir," he said. "It's a blooming funny war. You never knows the name of the place where you're fighting at, unless you 'ears it by chance."

Then he added:

"Could you tell us, sir, 'ow's the war going? Are we giving the Germans a proper 'iding all along the line?"

We inquired regarding their treatment. They didn't particularly fancy the food—"narsty slop," the sergeant called it—although it was reasonably plentiful; and, being true Englishmen, they sorely missed their tea. Then, too, on the night before their overcoats had been taken from them and no explanations vouchsafed.

"We could 'ave done with them," said the speaker bitterly; "pretty cold it was in this 'ere car. And what with winter coming on and everything I call it a bit thick to be taking our overcoats off of us."

We went and asked a German officer who had the convoy in charge the reason for this, and he said the overcoats of all the uninjured men, soldiers as well as prisoners, had been confiscated to furnish coverings for such of the wounded as lacked blankets. Still, I observed that the guards for the train had their overcoats. So I do not vouch for the accuracy of his explanation.

It was getting late in the afternoon and the fifth train to pull in from the south since our advent on the spot—or possibly it was the sixth—had just halted when, from the opposite direction, a troop-train, long and heavy, panted into sight and stopped on the far track while the men aboard it got an early supper of hot victuals. We crossed over to have a look at the new arrivals.

It was a long train, drawn by one locomotive and shoved by another, and it included in its length a string of flat cars upon which were lashed many field pieces, and commandeered automobiles, and even some family carriages, not to mention baggage wagons and cook wagons and supply wagons. For a wonder, the coaches in which the troops rode were new, smart coaches, seemingly just out of the builders' hands. They were mainly first and second class coaches, varnished outside and equipped with upholstered compartments where the troopers took their luxurious ease. After the German fashion the soldiers had decorated each car with field flowers and sheaves of wheat and boughs of trees, and even with long paper streamers of red and white and black. Also, the artists and wags of the detachment had been busy with colored chalks. There was displayed on one car a lively crayon picture of a very fierce, two-tailed Bavarian lion eating up his enemies—a nation at a bite. Another car bore a menu:

Russian caviar
Servian rice meat — English roast beef
Belgian ragout — French pastry

Upon this same car was lettered a bit of crude verse which, as we had come to know, was a favorite with the German private. By my poor translation it ran somewhat as follows:

For the Slav, a kick we have,
And for the Jap a slap;
The Briton too—we'll beat him blue,
And knock the Frenchman flat.

Altogether the train had quite the holidaying air about it and the men who traveled on it had the same spirit too. They were Bavarians—all new troops, and nearly all young fellows. Their accouterments were bright and their uniforms almost unsoiled, and I saw that each man carried in his right boot top the long, ugly-looking dirk-knife that the Bavarian trooper fancies. The Germans always showed heat when they found a big service clasp-knife hung about a captured Englishman's neck on a lanyard, calling it a barbarous weapon because of the length of the blade and the long sharp bradawl which folded into a slot at the back of the handle; but an equally grim bit of cutlery in a Bavarian's bootleg seemed to them an entirely proper tool for a soldier to be carrying.

The Fire-Eating Bavarian

The troops—there must have been a full battalion of them—piled off the coaches to exercise their legs. They skylarked about on the earth, and sang and danced, and were too full of coltish spirits to eat the rations that had been brought from the kitchen for their consumption.

Seeing our cameras, a lieutenant who spoke English came up to invite us to make a photograph of him and his men, with their bedecked car for a background. He had been ill, he said, since the outbreak of hostilities, which explained why he was just now getting his first taste of active campaigning service.

"Wait," he said vainglorously, "just wait until we get at the damned British. Some one else may have the Frenchmen we want to get our hands on the Englishmen. Do you know what my men say? They say they are glad for once in their lives to enjoy a fight where the policemen won't interfere and spoil the sport. That's the Bavarian for you—the Prussian is best at drill, but the Bavarian is the best fighter in the whole world. Only let us see the enemy—that is all we ask!

"I say, what news have you from the front? All goes well, eh? As for me I only hope there will be some of the enemy left for us to kill. It is a glorious thing—this going to war! I think we shall get there very soon, where the fighting is. I can hardly wait for it." And with that he hopped up on the steps of the nearest car and posed for his picture.

Having just come from the place whither he was so eagerly repairing I might have told him a few things. I might for example have told him what the captain of a German battery in front of Laon had said, and that was this:

"I have been on this one spot for nearly three weeks now, serving my guns by day and by night. I have lost nearly half of my original force of men and two of my lieutenants. We shoot over those tree tops yonder in accordance with directions for range and distance which come from somewhere else over field telephone, but we never see the men at whom we are firing. They fire back without seeing us, and sometimes their shells fall short or go beyond us, and sometimes they fall among us and kill and wound a few of us. Thus it goes on day after day. I have not with my own eyes seen a Frenchman or an Englishman unless he was a prisoner. It is not so much pleasure—fighting like this."

Hospital Sights

I might have told the young Bavarian lieutenant of other places where I had been—places where the dead lay for days unburied. I might have told him there was nothing particularly pretty or particularly edifying about the process of being killed. Death, I take it, is never a very tidy proceeding, and in battle it acquires an added unkemptness. Men who are suddenly and sorely stricken have a way of shrinking up inside their clothes; unless they die on the instant they have a way of tearing their coats open and gripping with their hands at their vitals, as though to hold the life in; they have a way of sprawling their legs in grotesque postures; and finally they have a way of putting their arms up before their faces as though at the very last they would try to shut out a dreadful vision. Those contorted, twisted arms with the elbows up, those spraddled stark legs, and, most of all, those white dots of shirts—these I had learned to associate in my own mind with the accomplished fact of mortality upon the field.

I might have told him of sundry field hospitals which I had lately visited. I could re-create in my memory, as I shall be able to re-create it as long as I live and have my senses, a certain room in a certain schoolhouse in a French town where seven men wriggled and fought in the unspeakable fatal torments of lockjaw; and another room filled to capacity with men who had been borne there because there was nothing humanly to be done for them, and who now lay very quietly, their suetty-gray faces laced with tiny red stripes of fever, and their paling eyes staring up at nothing at all; and still another room given over entirely to stumps of men, who lacked each a leg or an arm, or a leg and an arm, or both legs or both arms; and still a fourth room wherein were men—and boys too—all blinded, all learning to grope about in the everlasting black night which would be their portion through all their days.

Indeed for an immediate illustration of the fruitage of the business toward which he was hastening I might have taken him by the arm and led him across two sets of tracks and shown him men in the prime of life who were hatcheled like flax, and mauled like blocks, and riddled like sieves, and macerated out of the living image of their Maker.

But I did none of these things. He had a picture of glory before his eyes. He wanted to fight, or he thought he did, which came to the same thing. So what I did was to take down his name and promise to send him a completed copy of his picture in the care of his regiment and brigade; and the last I saw of him he was half out of a car window waving good-by to us and wishing us *auf wiedersehen* as he was borne away to his ordained place.

As we rode back through the town of Maubeuge in the dusk, the company which had sung O Strassburg in the Franco-German beer shop at the prow of the corner where the three streets met were just marching away. I thought I caught, in the waving gray line that flowed along like quicksilver, a glimpse of the boy who was so glad because he was about to have some luck.

In those two days fourteen thousand wounded men came back through Maubeuge, and possibly ten times that many new troops, belonging to the first of October draft of a million, passed down the line. In that week fifty thousand wounded men returned from the German right wing alone.

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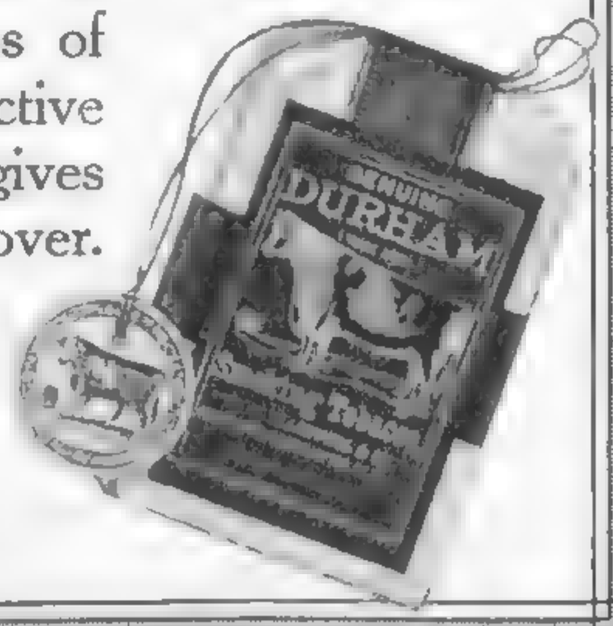

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THE HUMAN FRACTION

(Concluded from Page 13)

It was about this time that Azalia's father told John that he found himself getting on; a man at sixty-five couldn't do the work of a man of forty. He said that he ought to have been taken into partnership by his firm, and that their consciences were pricking enough about it so that he thought they would let him appoint his own successor. It was an eighteen-hundred-a-year job, and in the future it might be more. He wanted to break John in to the work, so that some day, when John's expenses were heavier, he'd have the money to meet them. It was clear to old Blair that he and his wife would not live forever, and that when John was no longer doing partnership housekeeping with them he'd find his financial burdens too heavy, unless his salary were increased. John agreed with him. For though Azalia no longer spent the money she had been accustomed to on clothes, she did spend it on massage and various kinds of psychotherapy.

When the children were eight and ten years old Mrs. Blair died. Most of her relatives and friends, and John's aunt, said that Azalia had worn her out; that she had done two women's work in order that Azalia shouldn't do one woman's work. That was their way of calling Azalia a human fraction. Azalia took to her bed, and a trained nurse had the care of her for two weeks. No trained nurse paid any attention to Blair, but that was not the reason he suddenly broke and showed his employers what an old man he was. His head wouldn't work any more. When he wanted to put his mind on his business he found himself dreaming of the old days when he had first courted his wife. His position gave him up and his son-in-law took his place.

So Blair, too, became a human fraction, not Azalia's kind, but the other kind. This other kind is more pathetic because it is self-conscious, as Azalia's kind or Cora's kind is not. No household is really complete without such a human fraction, and thousands of homes possess them. We see them in the parks—old men or women, wheeling baby-carriages or holding toddlers by the hands. Many such an old man's face carries signs of the last battle bravely fought—the struggle to be patient under dependence for bread; to be patient when he craves for quiet, in a crowded house where he is little more than a relict from an unnecessary generation; to be patient under a sense of failing powers, and under a sense of haste to be gone to some other world where old age blossoms into glorious fresh strength.

From Bad to Worse

Such human fractions we see in the streets going on errands, and in the shops trying painfully to do justice to the errands. We see them in the nurseries dressing the children, or in the kitchen doing the hardest and least particular work. These people, who have once done a full work in the world and have now become mere fillers-in, mere feeders to richer lives than their own, mere annexes put away on the side lines, nevermore to count in the big race in life, these people surely must be written large in that Great Book of the Spirit where a man's final value is accurately set down, past power of any human hand to blot or any human eye to misread.

Blair had been a fine, competent man in his day. He could never have taken his place with big managers in big cities, but in his country town he had ranked high—none higher. He had had a sound grasp on his business and had won the respect of his fellows. He had been a good citizen; he had brought up six children self-sacrificingly. Now he was an old man with his grasp gone, and nothing in a money way to show for all his years of hard work except an endowment policy of some ten thousand dollars.

Azalia said she couldn't bear to live in a house where dear mother had died. She added that the neighborhood was running down, and that it would be better for the children to live in John's own house. Azalia's plans were always based on John's good and the children's good, and the fact that they worked out to Azalia's advantage chiefly did not strike John. In the new home Blair began to realize his function as a human fraction. The other house had been in his name. Though the housekeeping had been in common, yet he had been the head. Now he was an annex in Azalia's house. He had been an eighteen-hundred-dollar-a-year man, whose tastes had been considered by his wife at least. Now he was a nothing-a-year man, whose tastes were not considered by Azalia. He had done a man's work in the world, and now he did a servant's work.

For when the trained nurse had gone Azalia's invalidism still kept her in bed. Blair got the breakfast and saw the children off to school. He didn't have to dress them, for their grandmother had taught them to do that for themselves. Perhaps she realized her mistakes in Azalia's training. John would have helped his father-in-law, but the old man objected.

A Typical Episode

"No," he said. "No, John. I don't want you to wear yourself out before your time. You've got to make good at your new job, and for a while it'll take every ounce of energy you have to do that."

John realized the sense in this.

"We've got to take care of Azalia," Blair said. "Later on the children can help more."

By and by the household organized itself on a comfortable working basis, especially for Azalia. Blair made the breakfast and washed the dishes. A neighboring woman prepared the midday meal, and Blair and the little girls got the supper. A woman came twice a week to wash and iron and clean. Azalia accomplished a little languid bed-making and dusting. Blair did all the real planning for the household, all the marketing and all the errands.

"Father is wonderfully useful to me," Azalia would say in Blair's hearing to her husband, with a sweet smile.

Blair wanted no higher praise than this. To John, Azalia would add:

"I am of so little real physical use to you and the children that at least I want to be appreciative. I told you long ago, dearest, when you insisted on my marrying you, that if I couldn't do coarse work for you I would try to be an inspiration."

John told her she was. He and the children and her father went on adoring her. John never really knew that his wife was a human fraction. The nearest he came to it was a few years later, shortly after his father-in-law's death. Sixteen-year-old Patricia was at home, washing up the dishes after the Sunday dinner, which she and Beatrix had got and served. The family no longer kept a servant, for the cost of living had gone up, and John was carrying, considering his salary, a very heavy endowment policy, so that Azalia's old age would be sure to be comfortable. On this Sunday afternoon he had walked to the graveyard, where Azalia had preceded him to decorate the graves of her father and mother. She had driven in the little electric car which she had bought out of her share of her father's estate. She had taken Beatrix with her. Beatrix was even more beautiful than Patricia, and her type contrasted with Azalia's, so that mother and daughter made a beautiful picture together. After the flowers were put in the car there was not room left for another passenger without crowding Azalia, and so John had said he preferred walking. As he approached the Blair plot he saw two women looking at Azalia.

"There's a woman that's had an easy life," said one in a bitter tone.

"She got it because she took it," her companion replied.

John walked on. No, Azalia had taken nothing, he thought; but much had been given her. She did not think she had an easy life, and yet what trouble had ever befallen her? Only the death of her parents and indifferent health.

John didn't consider Azalia spoiled, simply because she never lost her temper, never nagged, and only showed a martyr's face when any duty arose that she was determined to evade. Yet he knew that she had always been carried, first by her parents and now by himself and her children. He did not in his own mind call her or think of her as a human fraction, but he knew she had not done an ordinary woman's work in the world. Yet immediately his stirring doubt of Azalia's share in the success of their marriage was quelled by a remembrance of something Patricia had said a few days before. She had been ironing after school and had got the supper, and after that had been too tired to go with Beatrix to a party to which they had both been invited.

When John had told her that he wished he need not put anything but her school work on her shoulders, she had smiled at him out of eyes like Azalia's, and had said to him with a spirit like his own:

"I don't mind, Daddy. It's all in the family. Mother makes it up to us by her sweetness and love, and because we love her we can share up among us what she can't do."

"Yes, I guess it's love that does it," John said.

He did not say what love did or whose love it was. But he went forward, an affectionate look on his face, to where his wife stood by her mother's gravestone. Beatrix was stooping to arrange the flowers, because Azalia had to think of her back. One hand was pressed to her side, to remind John and Beatrix of what any exertion might do to her. But she dropped her hand when John approached, as if to minimize her own sufferings, and she looked at him with a sweet and patient smile.

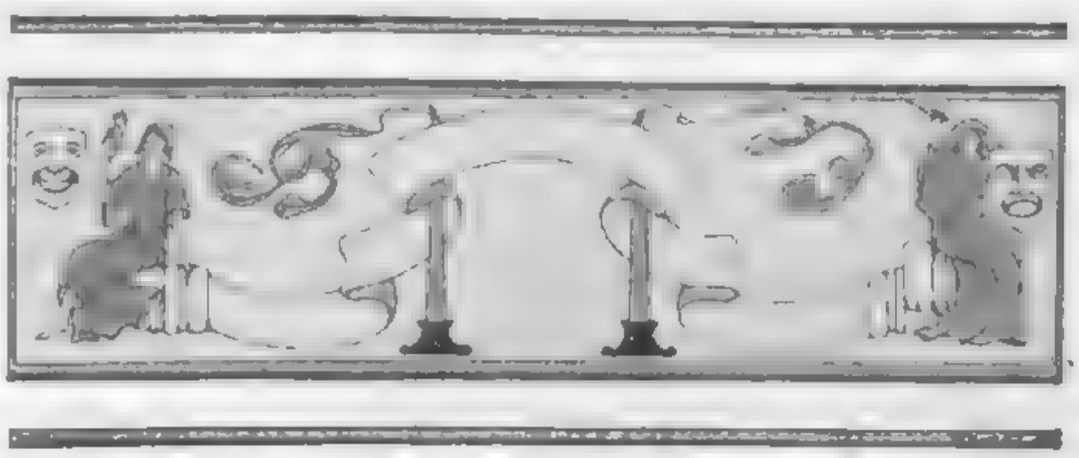
Fog-Prevention

A PROMISING method of preventing fogs on rivers and harbors has been worked out by a French scientist, and was undergoing practical tests at Lyons when the experiments were stopped by the present war. His idea has seemed reasonable to a number of scientists of other countries, and so we may not have to wait for results until the conclusion of the war.

At Lyons bothersome fogs rise from the rivers Rhone and Saône. The problem was to prevent fog from forming above the water. The solution was to cover the rivers with a thin film of oil, in order to shut the air off from the water at all times.

An oil film could readily be provided at large expense; but the Frenchman's effort was to provide a film which should not be so costly that daily treatment of the flowing rivers, some miles above the city, would be impracticable. He sought for an oil or combination of oils that would spread over the surface in a very thin film and would not break too easily into surface pools of oil, like the grease drops on the surface of poorly made soup. After extensive experiments vegetable oils were found to possess those two qualities best.

At the time the experiments were stopped the scientist was confident he had discovered oils which would spread out so thinly that the film would be very much less than a millionth of an inch thick. A gallon of this combination would cover more than one hundred acres. He estimated that a daily dose of oil for the two rivers would cost about thirty dollars, which would not be high if the scheme succeeded on the large scale as well as it had succeeded in the experiments.



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MR. GREX OF MONTE CARLO

(Continued from Page 19)

"I have just come to pay you a little visit," he remarked easily. "I was only afraid you mightn't be up so early."

She bit her lip.

"You have no right to come here at all," she said severely; "and to present yourself at this hour is unheard of."

"I came early entirely out of consideration for your father," he assured her.

She frowned.

"My father?" she repeated, looking through the glasses again. "Please explain at once what you mean. My father is on that yacht, and I cannot imagine why he does not return."

"I can tell you," he answered, standing by her side and looking out seaward. "They are waiting for my orders before they let him off."

She turned her head and looked at him incredulously.

"Explain yourself, please," she insisted.

"With pleasure," he assented. "You see, I just had to make sure of being allowed to have a few minutes' conversation with you free from any interruption. Somehow or other," he added thoughtfully, "I don't believe your father likes me."

"I do not think," she replied coldly, "that my father has any feelings about you at all, except that he thinks you are abominably presumptuous."

"Because I want to marry you?"

She stamped with her foot upon the ground.

"Please do not say such absurd things! Explain to me at once what you mean by saying that my father is being kept there by your orders."

"I'll try," Lane answered. "He boarded that yacht last night by mistake. He thought that it was a hired one; but it isn't, it's mine. I found him there last night entertaining a little party of his friends in the saloon. They seemed quite comfortable, so I begged them to remain on as my guests for a short time."

"To remain?" she murmured bewildered. "For how long?"

"Until you've just read this through and thought it over."

He passed her a document which he had drawn from his pocket. She took it from him wonderingly.

When she had read a few lines the color came streaming into her cheeks. She threw it to the ground. He picked it up and replaced it in his pocket.

"But it is preposterous!" she cried. "That is a marriage license!"

"That's precisely what it is," he admitted. "I thought we'd be married at Nice. My sister is waiting to go along with us. I said we'd pick her up at the Hôtel de Paris."

Severe critics of her undoubted beauty had ventured at times to say that Fedora's face lacked expression. There was at that moment no room for any such criticism. Amazement struggled with indignation in her eyes. Her lips were quivering, her breath was coming quickly.

"Do you mean—— Have you given her or anyone to understand that there was any likelihood of my consenting to such an absurd scheme?"

"I merely told her what I hoped," he said quietly. "That is all I dared say even to myself. But I want you to listen to me."

His voice had grown softer. She turned her head and looked at him. He was much taller than she was, and in his gray tweed suit, his head a little thrown back, his straw hat clasped in his hands behind him, his clear gray eyes full of serious purpose, he was certainly not an unattractive figure to look upon. Unconsciously she found herself comparing him once more with the men of her world, found herself realizing even against her will the charm of his naïve and dogged honesty, his youth, his tenacity of purpose. She had never been made love to like this before.

"Please listen," he begged. "I am afraid that your father must be in a towering rage by now, but that can't be helped. He is out there, and he hasn't got an earthly chance of getting back until I give the word. We've got plenty of time to reach Nice before he can land. I just want you to realize, Fedora, that you are your own mistress. You can make or spoil your own life. No one else has any right to interfere. Have you ever seen anyone yet, back in your own country, among your own people, that you felt that you really cared for; that you honestly believed would be willing to lay down his life to make you happy?"

"No," she confessed simply, "I do not know that I have. Our men are not like that."

"That," he went on, "is because there is no one back there who cares as I do. I have spent some years of my life looking—quite unconsciously, but looking all the same—for some one like you. Now that I have found you I am glad I have waited. There couldn't be anyone else. There never could be, Fedora. I love you just in the way a man does love once in his life, if he's lucky. It's a queer sort of feeling, you know," he continued, leaning a little toward her. "It makes me quite sure that I could make you happy. It makes me quite sure that if you'll give me your hand and trust me, and leave everything to me, you'll have just the things in life that women want. Won't you be brave, Fedora? There are some things to break through, I know, but they don't amount to much, they don't really. And I love you, you know. You can't imagine yet what a wonderful difference that makes. But you'll find out and then you'll be glad."

She stood quite still. Her eyes were still fixed seaward, but she was looking beyond the yacht now, to the dim line where sky and sea seemed to meet. The vision of her past days seemed to be drawn out before her, a little monotonous, a little wearisome even in their splendor, more than a little empty. And underneath it all she was listening to a new music and her heart was telling her the truth.

"You don't need to make any plans," he said softly. "Go and put on your hat and some wrap to wear motoring. Bring a hand bag if you like. Flossie is waiting for us and she is rather a dear. You can leave everything else to me."

She looked timidly into his eyes. A new feeling was upon her. She gave him her hand almost shyly. Her voice trembled.

"If I come," she whispered, "you are quite sure that you mean it all? You are quite sure that you will not change?"

He raised her hand to his lips.

"Not in this world, dear," he answered with sublime confidence; "nor in any other!"

She stole away from him. He was left alone upon the terrace; alone, but with the exquisite conviction of her return, promised in that last half tremulous, half smiling look over her shoulder. Then suddenly life seemed to come to him with a rush—a new life filled with a new splendor. He was almost humbly conscious of bigger things than he had ever realized, a nearness to the clouds, a wonderful, thrilling sense of complete and absolute happiness. Reluctantly he came back to earth. His thoughts became practical. He went to the back of his car, drew out a rocket on a stick and thrust it firmly into the lawn. Then he started his engine and almost immediately afterward she came. She was wearing a white silk motor coat and a thick veil. Behind her came a bewildered French maid, carrying wraps, and a manservant with a heavy dressing case. In silence these things were stowed away. She took her place in the car. Lane struck a match and stepped on to the lawn.

"Don't be frightened," he said. "Here goes!"

A rocket soared up into the sky. Then he seated himself beside her and they glided off.

"That means," he explained, "that they'll let your father and the others land in two hours. We'll have plenty of time to get to Nice. Have you left any word for him?"

"I have left a very short message," she answered, "to say that I was going to marry you. He will never forgive me, and I feel very wicked and very ungrateful."

"Anything else?" he whispered, leaning a little toward her.

She sighed.

"And very happy," she murmured.

XXXVIII

HUNTERLEYS saw the Right Honorable Meredith Simpson and Monsieur Dousille off to Paris early on the morning following the happenings on the yacht. Then he called round at the hospital to find that Sidney Roche was out of danger, and went on to the villa with the good news. On his way back he stayed chatting with the bank manager until rather later than usual and afterward strolled on to the terrace, where he looked with some eagerness toward a certain point in the bay. The Minnehaha had departed. Mr. Grex and his friends, then, had been set free. Thoughtfully Hunterleys returned to the hotel. At the entrance he noticed two or three trunks being wheeled out which seemed to him somehow familiar. He stopped to look at the initials. They were his wife's.

"Is Lady Hunterleys leaving to-day?" he asked the luggage porter.

"By the evening train, sir," the man announced. "She would have caught the Côte d'Azur this morning, but there was no place on the train."

Hunterleys was perplexed. Some time after luncheon he inquired for Lady Hunterleys and found that she was not in the hotel. A reception clerk thought that he had seen her pass on her way to the Sporting Club. Hunterleys, after some moments of indecision, followed her. He was puzzled at her impending departure, unable to account for it. The Draconmeyers, he knew, proposed to stay for another month. He walked thoughtfully along the private way and climbed the stairs to the club. He looked for his wife in her usual place. She was not there. He made a little promenade of the rooms, and eventually he found her among the spectators round the baccarat table. He approached her at once.

"You are not playing?"

She started at the sound of his voice. She was dressed very simply in traveling clothes, and there were lines under her eyes as though she were fatigued.

"No," she admitted, "I am not playing."

"I understood in the hotel," he continued, "that you were leaving to-day."

"I am going back to England," she announced. "It does not amuse me here any longer."

He realized at once that something had happened. A curious sense of excitement stole into his blood.

"If you are not playing here, will you come and sit down for a few moments?" he invited. "I should like to talk to you."

She followed him without a word. He led the way to one of the divans in the roulette room.

"Your favorite place," he remarked, "is occupied."

She nodded.

"I have given up playing," she told him.

He looked at her in some surprise. She drew a little breath and kept her eyes steadily averted.

"You will probably know sometime or other," she continued, "so I will tell you now: I have lost four thousand pounds to Mr. Draconmeyer. I am going back to England to realize my own money, so as to be able to pay him at once."

"You borrowed four thousand pounds from Mr. Draconmeyer?" he repeated incredulously.

"Yes! It was very foolish, I know, and I have lost every penny of it. I am not the first woman, I suppose, who has lost her head in Monte Carlo," she added a little defiantly.

"Does Mr. Draconmeyer know that you are leaving?" he asked.

"Not yet," she answered after a moment's hesitation. "I had an interview with him yesterday, and I realized at once that the money must be paid, and without delay. I realized, too, that it was better I should leave Monte Carlo and break off my association with these people for the present."

In a sense it was a sordid story, yet to Hunterleys her words sounded like music.

"I am very pleased indeed," he said quietly, "that you feel like that. Draconmeyer is not a man to whom I should like my wife to owe money for a moment longer than was absolutely necessary."

"Your estimate of him was correct," she confessed slowly. "I am sorry, Henry."

He rose suddenly to his feet. An inspiration had seized him.

"Come," he declared, "we will pay Draconmeyer back without sending you home to sell your securities. Come and stand with me."

She looked at him in amazement.

"Henry!" she exclaimed. "You are not going to play? Don't! Take my advice and don't!"

He laughed.

"We'll see," he replied confidently. "You wouldn't believe that I am a fatalist,

would you? I am though. Everything that I had hoped for seems to be happening to-day. You have found out Draconmeyer, we have checkmated Mr. Grex, I have drunk the health of Felicia and David Briston ——"

"Felicia and David Briston?" she interrupted quickly. "What do you mean?"

"You knew, of course, that they were engaged?" he explained. "I called round at the villa this morning after I had been to the hospital, and found them busy fixing the wedding day."

She looked at him vaguely.

"Engaged?" she murmured. "Why, I thought ——"

A spot of color suddenly burned in her cheeks. She was beginning to understand. It was Draconmeyer who had put those ideas into her head. Her heart gave a little leap.

"Henry!" she whispered.

He was already at the table, however. He changed five thousand-franc notes deliberately, counted his plaques and turned to her.

"I am going to play on your principle," he declared. "I have always thought it an interesting one. See, the last number was twenty-two. I am going to back twenty and all the *carrés*."

He covered the board round number twenty. There were a few minutes of suspense, then the click as the ball fell into the little space.

"*Vingt-huit, noir, passe et pair!*" the croupier announced.

Hunterleys' stake was swept away. He only smiled.

"Our numbers are going to turn up," he insisted cheerfully. "I am certain of it now. Do you know that this is the first time I have played since I have been in Monte Carlo?"

She watched him half in fear.

This time Hunterleys staked on twenty-nine, with the maximum *en plein* and all the *carrés* and *chevaux*. Again the few moments of suspense, the click of the ball, the croupier's voice:

"*Vingt-neuf, noir, impair et passe!*"

She clutched at his arm.

"Henry!" she gasped.

He laughed.

"Open your bag," he directed. "We'll soon fill it."

He left his stake untouched. Thirty-one turned up. He won two *carrés* and let the table go once without staking. Ten was the next number. Immediately he placed the maximum on number fourteen, *carrés* and *chevaux*. Again the pause; again the croupier's voice:

"*Quatorze, rouge, pair et manque!*"

Hunterleys showed no exultation and scarcely any surprise. He gathered in his winnings and repeated his stake. This time he won one of his *carrés*. The next time *quatorze* turned up again. For half an hour he continued, following his few chosen numbers according to the run of the table. At the end of that time Violet's satchel was full and he was beginning to collect thousand-franc notes for his plaques. He made a little calculation in his mind and decided that he must already have won more than the necessary amount.

"Our last stake," he remarked coolly.

The preceding number had been twenty-six. He placed the maximum on twenty-nine, the *carrés, chevaux*, the column, color and last dozen. He felt Violet's fingers clutching his arm. There was a little buzz of excitement all round the table as the croupier announced the number:

"*Vingt-neuf, noir, impair et passe!*"

They took their winnings into the anteroom beyond, where Hunterleys ordered tea. There was a little flush on Violet's cheeks. They counted the money. It amounted to nearly five thousand pounds.

"Henry!" she exclaimed. "I think that that last coup was the most marvelous win I ever saw!"

"A most opportune one at any rate," he replied grimly. "Look who is coming."

Draconmeyer had entered the room and was peering everywhere as though in search of some one. He suddenly caught sight of them, hesitated for a moment and then approached. He addressed himself to Violet.

"I have just seen Linda," he said. "She is broken-hearted at the thought of your departure."

"I am sorry to leave her," Violet replied, "but I feel that I have stayed quite long enough in Monte Carlo. By the by, Mr. Draconmeyer, there is that little affair of the money you were kind enough to advance to me."

Draconmeyer stood quite still. He looked from husband to wife.

"Four thousand pounds, my wife tells me," Hunterleys remarked coolly as he began to count out the notes. "It is very good of you indeed to have acted as her banker. Do you mind being paid now? Our movements are a little uncertain, and our settling up now will avoid the necessity of sending you a check."

Draconmeyer laughed. It was not a pleasant laugh, nor was it in the least mirthful.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "I had forgotten that little matter. As you will, certainly."

He accepted the notes and stuffed them into his pocket.

"By the by," he continued, "I think that I ought to congratulate you, Sir Henry. That last little affair of yours was wonderfully stage-managed. Your country owes you more than it is ever likely to pay. You have succeeded at any rate in delaying the inevitable."

"I trust," Hunterleys inquired politely, "that you were not detained upon the yacht for very long?"

"We landed at the Villa at twelve o'clock this morning," Draconmeyer replied. "You know, of course, of the little surprise our young American friend had prepared for Mr. Grex?"

Hunterleys shook his head.

"I have heard nothing definite."

"He was married to the daughter of the Grand Duke Augustus at midday at Nice," Draconmeyer announced. "His Serene Highness received a telephone message only a short time ago."

Violet gave a little cry. She leaned across the table eagerly.

"You mean that they have eloped?"

Draconmeyer assented.

"All Monte Carlo will be talking about it to-morrow," he declared. "The grand duke has been doing all he can to get it hushed up, but it is useless. I will not detain you any longer. I see that you are about to have tea."

"We shall meet, perhaps, in London?" Hunterleys remarked as Draconmeyer prepared to depart.

Draconmeyer shook his head.

"I think not," he replied. "The doctors have advised me that the climate of England is bad for my wife's health, and I feel that my own work there is finished. I have received an offer to go out to South America for a time. Very likely I shall accept."

He passed on with a final bow. Violet looked across at her husband and her eyes shone.

"It seems like a fairy tale, Henry," she whispered. "You don't know what a load on my mind that money has been, and how I was growing to detest Mr. Draconmeyer."

He smiled.

"I was rather hating the beast myself," he admitted. "Tell me, what are your plans really?"

"I hadn't made any," she confessed, "except to get away as quickly as I could."

He leaned a little across the table.

"Elopements are rather in the fashion," he said. "What do you think? Couldn't we have a little dinner at Ciro's and catch the last train to Nice, have a look at Richard and his wife, and then go on to Cannes and make our way back to England later?"

She looked at him and as she looked his face grew younger. There was something in her eyes that reminded him of the days which for so many weary months he had been striving to forget.

"Henry," she murmured, "I have been very foolish. If you can trust me once more I think I can promise that I'll never be half so idiotic again."

He rose to his feet blithely.

"It has been my fault just as much," he declared, "and the fault of circumstances. I couldn't tell you the whole truth, but there has been a villainous conspiracy going on here. Draconmeyer, Selingman and the grand duke were all in it, and I have been working like a slave. Now it's all over—finished this morning on Richard's yacht. We've done what we could. I'm a free lance now and we'll spend the holidays together."

She gave him her fingers across the table and he held them firmly in his. Then she, too, rose and they passed out together. There was a wonderful change in Hunterleys. He seemed to have grown years younger.

"Come," he exclaimed, "they call this the City of Pleasure, but these are the first happy moments I have spent in it. We'll gamble in five-franc pieces for an hour or so. Then we'll go back to the hotel and have our trunks sent down to the station, dine at Ciro's and wire Richard. Where are you going to stake your money?"

"I think I shall begin with number twenty-nine," she laughed.

A few days later they lunched with Richard and his wife at the Casino at Cannes. The change in the two young people was most impressive. Fedora had lost the dignified aloofness of Monte Carlo. She seemed to have found her girlhood, and she was brilliantly, supremely happy. Richard, on the other hand, was more serious. He took Hunterleys to one side as they waited for the cars.

"We are on our way to Biarritz," he said, "by easy stages. The yacht will meet us there and we are going to sail at once for America."

"Fedora doesn't mind?" Hunterleys asked.

"Not in the least," Richard declared exultantly. "She knows what my duty is and, Hunterleys, I am going to try to do it. The people over there may need a lot of convincing, but they are going to hear the truth from me and have it drummed into them. It's going to be 'Wake up, America!' as well as 'Wake up, England!'"

"Stick at it, Richard," Hunterleys advised. "Don't mind a little discouragement. Men who see the truth, and aren't afraid to keep on calling attention to it, get laughed at a great deal. People speak of them tolerantly, listen to what they say, doubt the reasonableness of it and store it at the back of their heads; but in the end it does good. Your people and mine are slow to believe and slow to understand, but the truth sinks in if one proclaims it often enough and loudly enough. We are going through much the same thing in our own country just now—with regard to national service, for one thing. Here come your cars. You travel in state, Richard."

The young man laughed good-naturedly.

"There's nothing in life that I can give her that Fedora won't have," he asserted. "We spent the first two days absolutely alone. Now her maid and my man come along with the luggage in the heavy car and we take the little racer. Jolly hard work they have to keep anywhere near us, I can tell you. Say, may I make a rather impertinent remark, Sir Henry?"

"You have earned the right to say anything to me you choose," Hunterleys replied. "Go ahead."

"Why, it's only this," Richard continued a little awkwardly: "I have never seen Lady Hunterleys look half so ripping, and you seem years younger."

Hunterleys smiled.

"To tell you the truth, I feel it. You see, years ago, when we started out for our honeymoon, there was a crisis after the first week and we had to rush back to England. We seem to have forgotten ever to finish that honeymoon of ours. We are doing it now."

The two women came down the steps, the cynosure of a good many eyes, the two most beautiful women in the Casino. Richard helped his wife into her place, wrapped her up and took the steering wheel.

"Hyères this evening and Marseilles to-morrow," he announced. "Biarritz on Saturday. We shall stay there for a week, and then—'Wake up, America!'"

The cars glided off. Hunterleys and his wife stood on the steps of the Casino waving their hands.

"Something about those children," Hunterleys declared as they vanished, "makes me feel absurdly young. Let's go shopping, Violet. I want to buy you some flowers and chocolates."

She smiled happily as she took his arm for a moment.

"And then?"

"What would you like to do afterward?" he asked.

"I think," she replied, leaning toward him, "that I should like to go to that nice Englishman who lets villas. Perhaps we could find one right at the edge of the sea, quite hidden. Then we could lock the gates and give no one our address, and have you forget for just one month that there was any work to do in the world, or anyone else in it except me."

"Just to make up," he laughed softly.

"Women are like that, you know," she murmured.

"The man's office is this way," Hunterleys said, turning off the main street.

(THE END)

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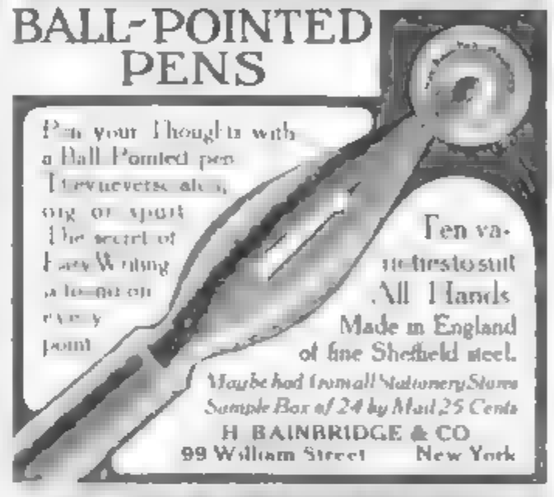

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MIND-CAT!

(Continued from Page 16)

"Gee, I could skate from here to Bronxville if anybody would lend me a rink big enough!"

And even as she spoke they were gliding forward, always his close arm engulfing her, and, when his head grazed hers, the breath of pomade in her nostrils.

"Whew! Let's stop, Max."

"Stop?"

"Whew! All of a sudden I kinda gave out. I—I'm tired, Max. Let's quit. I guess I gotta go home."

"Home!"

"I'm tired, I tell you."

"Come, then; we'll go over to the table and wait for the big show."

"I—— They just giggle and giggle; and—and I'm tired."

The light of inspiration flashed into his narrow face, illuminating it.

"Wanna cut it, Gert, and go out for a spin?"

"Like fun, freshie!"

"I got the car outside, Gert. It's a swell night and I got a fur rug and all."

"Nix. The Subway's my limit."

"I dare you, Gert! A little spin through the Park and then I'll shoot you home, so Shap won't shoot me first."

"The crowd—they'll get sore."

"Sore nothin'! They ain't got time to miss us. Looka them out there—all lit up like Christmas trees, already!"

"I ——"

"The minute you say home, Gert,. I'll turn in. Just a little spin. Gee, ain't you no kind of a sport no more?"

"I—— You should know what's eatin' me! You—you should know!" Her lips quivered, and she made a motion as though to tighten her skate strap. "If you was in my shoes you'd wish you was dead!"

"Aw, what's hurtin' you, kiddo? I seen all along you was deep blue under your coat. I ain't hurt your little feelin's, have I, kiddo?"

She rose with the gesture of throwing off an imaginary cloak, and her lips curled consciously back into their conscious smile.

"Nothin' you could say could gimme the kind of blues I got, Max. I—I am as blue as the navy. Aw, what's the use of airing my troubles on you? Come on; I—I'm all right now."

He blinked his eyes in a series of rapid winks and stroked her muff.

"Poor kid! I seen as soon as Shap was missing there was somethin' wrong."

"It ain't nothin'."

"You ain't been real on that joy stuff you been spraying round all evening, little kiddo."

He continued to stroke her muff, with the ingratiating movement calculated to bring out the purr in a cat; and his smile, surmounted by a black mustache as neat and as trimmed as a hedge, came closer.

"Poor kiddo, you!"

She drew back.

"Honest, Max, I—I think you're drunk."

"Nix."

"Come; let's skate."

"Let's dodge 'em, Gert. I don't wanna get in no New Year's rough-house with that cheap gang. You better lemme take you a spin and then home."

"You—you ain't steady enough."

"Such a nerve! Look! I'm as steady as a lamp-post."

"Nothin' doin'!"

"Come on, Gert—a little spin. It's a large night and it'll brace you up!"

"I—can't."

"Come on!"

"I—I feel just like I gotta get some air or I—I'll topple."

"Sure you will!"

"I—do my skates!"

Skates off and across the wooden promenade stealthily, with backward glances at the merrymakers.

"They'll never miss us, kiddo."

Through the blazing entrance they hurried and out into a night as blue as ink and as deep as a well, and a million stars that trembled on the brink of the New Year.

"Whew, but this feels good!"

"Sure it does! Wait till I crank up."

"Swell little car. He promised his mother or we'd have one too—one swell little car like this!"

He climbed in beside her and tucked the robe carefully about her, folding it round and under her feet—pushing into his heavy gauntlet-top gloves, throwing his clutch, jerking forward, turning about with careful avoidance of the merry traffic. Up a dark aisle of side street they went, across the busy maze of Columbus Circle, and into the quiet recesses of the Park, whizzing under the trees, the wind vivifying as wine.

"I guess this ain't got it all over sitting in a café with that gang of cheap sports! I know a little café of my own, on Hudson Road, that is some real café."

Wind sang in her ears.

"Gee, Max, this is great!" Her voice came remotely from the cloud of fur rug, her face in its center, like a rosy flower. "Gee!"

The lake lay alongside the road under a thin sheen of ice, broken in places, with the water filming it over and freezing again. Week-old snowdrifts lay in rocky crevices, white patches in the gloom; but the road was smooth and cold and as shiny as a steel rail; and always the singing and stinging of the wind.

"I told you, Peachie, that this would take the blues out of you, didn't I?"

"It takes more even than this to get rid of the kinda blues I got. Gee, slow up a little, Max! My middle name ain't speed, like yours."

"This ain't nothin'; wait till we get out a ways."

"Whoa! Where are you goin', there, Max? Don't go out of the Park. Don't go up Seventh Avenue. Where you takin' me, Max? Quit! Just turn back and take me once more round the Park—and then home. I gotta go home."

"I'm going to get them blues out of you or know the reason why, kiddo. A spin out a ways and a drink on the road ain't goin' to hurt you. I'm goin' to get them blues out of you."

"No, no, Max; I gotta go home."

They were on a long, shining stretch of street as wide as a boulevard, a strip of the Park dividing it and naked trees meeting over their heads.

"I gotta get home. Do you hear?"

"Listen!"

A low bleat, rising to the clarion call of a long-winded whistle; chimes ringing out suddenly and full of resonance on the clear air; bells; windows shrieking up in block-long and block-high apartment houses; horns; shouts from the thin stream of uptown pedestrians; a blank cartridge fired from an automobile that whizzed past them on the road; more chimes!

"Happy New Year, kiddo!"

"Happy New Year! Happy New Ye-ar!"

"Aw, you ain't cryin', are you, kiddo? Aw, I wish I knew who was hurtin' you; I'd wipe up this road with 'em! Here, lemme dry them tears—lemme dry 'em."

"No, no; I ain't crying, Max; only I—I ——"

"Aw! Aw! Cryin' like a spout! Aw! Aw! Here; lemme dry 'em."

"Quit!"

A sudden turn that jerked her sharply backward, the hollow sound of riding over a bridge, and they were out on an open ledge of highway. Below them the river ran thick, persistently fighting off the shackles of ice, as a half-swooning man walks the night through to fight off the sleep of morphia.

"I'm goin' to stop this old car right here in this very road, and take 'oo little baby right in my arms and dry them tears."

"Max! You—you dare! Max! Whatta you think I am?"

"The cutest, tootsiest little ——"

"Quit! I wanna go back, Max. Look! We're way out in the country and I gotta get back."

"Just a little farther, Tootsie! Gee, you oughta see them cheeks of yours! A kid that likes spinnin' like you oughta have a car of her own. Shap can afford one."

"It's her—his mother. He promised the old lady he—he wouldn't buy one. He promised; and when Shap promises—well, you know!"

"It's a darn shame! Gee, which one is his wife—the old dame or you? I seen how things stood this afternoon the way you had to handle her to make the get-away with us. When she heard the word auto she nearly threw a fit."

"We gotta turn, Max."

"Aw, be a sport, Gert! Didn't I promise to get them blues out of you!"

"You! Why, you couldn't get the blues out of my cat!"

"Watch me! Arrow Inn is only two miles out, Tootsie one of the grandest little roadhouses round here. I wanna warm you up before I dump you home on the old lady."

"You cut that!"

"Poor little Tootsie!"

He slowed until they were running silently; and, high above the river and under the robe, his hand moved toward hers.

"Poor little Tootsie!"

"Quit!"

"Aw, touchy, what am I doin'?"

"Don't you—don't you get fresh with me!"

"Sure I won't."

"Take me home!"

"Tell me all about the row at home, Tootsie. I'm the best little sympathizer you ever seen. Why you beatin' it round alone on New Year's Eve, kiddo Tootsie?"

"It's none of your business, Max Berkovitch!"

"I ain't buttin' in; but for a fellow to let his queen down cold on New Year's Eve, to do the mamma-hoy act, ain't ——"

"Lots you know about it, Max Berkovitch! You—you'd do worse than that."

"Nix! You got me wrong there, kiddo. But I know what's hurtin' you, all-righty. If he's havin' his night like he wants, you deserve yours too, Toots."

"Fine chance of me makin' a night of it with you! I'd rather walk across the river."

"You don't mean that, Toots; but it's a game little bluff you're putting up."

"You quit lettin' out speed there! You turn round."

For answer he leaned to the wheel and released a score of miles, so that lights, bridges and trees hurtled recklessly past; and she grasped his sleeve.

"Max!"

And above the wind his voice:

"Hold your hat!"

"Max!"

At a curve they slowed.

"Take a tip from me, Tootsie; don't start wrong and let an old hag lord it over you. I've seen too much of the mother-in-law gag. Stand up for your rights; he won't do it for you. There ain't a hag living could ——"

"You cut that!"

"The next time the old dame cackles too much just you send for your Uncle Fuller, and I'll take care of you. If Shap ain't there with the rescue ladder, just you send for me—eh, Tootsie? I wanna see a lot of you from now on."

He flung out one arm suddenly—right hand guiding the wheel; left drawing her to him, rug and all.

"We'll fix the old dame, kiddo; we will ——"

"You ferret, you! You ain't even fit to breathe that old lady's name! You keep her name out of your mouth; she's too white for you to even touch her name, you—you——!"

"Go your bluff, kiddo; I like it when you do it!"

She withdrew herself to the remotest corner of the seat.

"You ain't fit to breathe that old lady's name or his name, that treats her like she ought to be treated. You—don't you dare to breathe their names! Don't you dare to touch me! I might 'a' known you was still a rat, just like you used to be. You take me home! Home, I say!"

"Gad, I like your temper, kiddo!"

"You take me home or I I'll jump! I'll jump!"

"That's right; fire up!" He leaned to the wheel as though he would gouge out the very darkness, his white teeth flashing. "Fire up! Gee, ain't it a shame a fellow can't do two things at once—hug the daylights out of his girl and put on speed at the same time! You're a good little actress, queenie. Anybody'd think you was real on that stuff you're pullin'."

"Old wiseacre, you!" She threw out her arm to his coat sleeve and her face came round to his suddenly with the smile of a rogue in her eyes. "Old wiseacre, you! Not to fall for the tragedy-queen stuff!"

He laughed shortly.

"I knew you wasn't real, kiddo—and I knew you wasn't goin' to do the movie-thriller jump act any more'n I was; but you're cute, all right, and I like you. Cute ain't no name for it!"

They were running at low gear, the engine turning over slowly; and his face was nearing hers, so that she could feel the

warmth of his smile and under the rug the warmth of his fingers approaching hers.

"Just once on the lips, kiddo!"

"Ugh! Ugh!"

With a lunge that tore at her strength she thrust the far end of the fur robe over his head, so that for a moment he was enveloped; and with the force of her arms she pushed him sharply from her, forcing his hand until the machine veered sharply.

"Bluffin', was I?"

A violent tugging at the door and she was suddenly out in the center of the road, running the few involuntary steps of momentum like a man alighting from a moving train, staggering, but landing on her feet and keeping them.

"Gert! You ——"

The automobile came to an immediate halt; and, untangling himself—dropping oaths, ejaculations and more oaths—he came toward her, running bareheaded down the center of the road.

"Are you crazy, girl? Are you loony? Cut out the melodrama stuff and get back in. Get back in or I'll shove you back in!"

"Don't you come near me!"

The light of sudden anger lay in his eyes.

"Get back in or I'll shove you in! That was a swell little play of yours to get me to slow, wasn't it? Get back in, I say, or I'll ——"

"Don't you come near me! I'm goin' home if I have to walk. Don't you dare come near me!"

"Some little walk you'll have, sister! You get back in there or I'll shove you in! Quit makin' a fool of me, or ——"

"You just try comin' near me!"

"Look! Here comes a whole string of machines. I ain't going to have a row out here on a pike road where they know me. If you know what's good for you you'll get back in, or I ——"

"If—if you come near me I—I'll yell! I'll yell for help to the first one that passes if you come near me. I'll yell! I'll yell! I'll yell!"

They were suddenly enveloped in the white glare from a pair of approaching acetylene lamps. With an oath he dodged and ran down the bit of road.

"Some walk home you'll have, you little devil, you! Some walk home! You little devil! You devil, you!"

For answer she turned and ran down the semi-steep embankment that bordered the road. The skeletons of summer's brambles struck up sharply through the frozen earth and tore her skirt.

From the blackness of an open field, standing panting like a hare in the torture of the chase, her hat knocked backward, her cheek snagged and a red rim beginning to outline the three-cornered wound, she beheld Mr. Berkovitch mount and, without a backward glance, plunge into the long, clean darkness of the road. Following him came a swift procession of flashing automobiles and the foamy laughter of revelry, which hung for a moment and died into the stillness of the countryside.

Sudden, terrifying silence, and a night so wide and full of depth that it rose up round her as though she were at its very bottom!

"Shap! Aaron! Ma! Shap!"

In the lonely place the wind was like moans rising up behind her.

"Shap! Ma!"

A bramble snapped at her feet and she began to run in a diagonal across the open field; across a ditch gone dry, and its rocks cut up through her soles; up an embankment; and twice she fell backward into the rocky ditch and the palms of her hands bled through her torn gloves. Once, in the distance, a street car, vague as a mirage and small as a toy, flashed past. She gathered her strength and in the fine frenzy of panic cried out; and her voice was like the cry of a plover in a bog.

Dawn is born with a veil over her face. The moment before it is torn aside to reveal the pinkness of her flesh is gray and full of the mystery of life and death; the mystery of shrouded figures walking silently down into a valley; of hooded women with dead babes.

In this grayest hour, when the veil lay thickest, Mrs. Aaron Shapiro turned into the marblelette foyer of her marblelette-front apartment house, tiptoed past a hall boy asleep in the elevator and up three flights of fireproof stairs, blind with tears, half fainting as she mounted. Within her apartment a light burned—a yellow slit of it lay beneath the door; and such a trembling laid hold of her for the moment that she sat down on the topmost step, tears flowing down the dirt-smirched course of her cheeks and over the zigzag welt.

Finally she rose and plucked some of the clinging brambles off her skirt hem, straightened her hat, dried her eyes, and rang the bell.

Her husband opened the door wide, so that he himself disappeared behind it; and she was suddenly in the shadow of the sideboard, opposite the uncleared table, with the white uncut cake in its center, the candles long since guttered out. And from a chair beside the window, gray as the dawn itself, Mrs. Shapiro was essaying to rise.

"*Ach Gott! Gott sei Dank! Ach*, Gertie! Gertie! My boy! Aaron, didn't I told you? Didn't I? Gertie! My boy! My boy—please!"

Mr. Shapiro emerged into the light slowly, his voice quiet enough.

"You get your things! You get your things and get out!"

"No, Shap! No, Shap—please! I—no!"

"You get your things and get out! Get out while I got it in me to keep down. Get out—please, Gertie, while I got it in me!"

"Aaron, my boy—please, my boy! Don't go, Gertie. Sh-h-h! He don't mean it—men talk when they get crazy; but he don't mean—— Aaron, my boy, won't you promise to mind me—the last time what I ask you, my boy; the ——"

"Go in your room, mamma!"

"No, no, ma; you stay—you stay!"

She backed farther into the shadow, clutching the form of her mother-in-law.

"Don't go, ma; for heaven's sake, don't go!"

"You get your things and get out—you hear! You get 'em and get out or I—I'll throw them out!"

"Aaron—my boy!"

"No woman of mine comes home at four—four o'clock in the morning, like a—like a a——"

"Shap!"

"Aaron! Before your mother you don't got the right to talk such things! She ain't been bad—have you, Gertie? She ain't been a bad girl. A foolish girl—yes; but not a bad girl, Aaron—not a bad girl."

"No no, I ain't, ma. I—I swear it! I—I ain't, ma. Don't let him come near me, ma; he—he's crazy to-night. Don't let him, ma—don't let him!"

"I ain't comin', Gert, if you get out—so help me!—if you get your things and get out while I got it in me to keep down. Get out, Gertie; that's all I ask. Get out to that low-down rat—that ——"

"Shap! It ain't *that*, Shap. Tell him, ma, it ain't. I swear it, Shap—on my knees I swear it. I swear it!"

"Say it to him, Gertie; say it ain't—it ain't ——"

"It ain't, Shap. I—I swear it!"

"She swears it, my son. Ain't it enough when she swears it? Aaron, my boy, won't you promise to mind me just this last time what I ask? She swears it, Aaron."

And into her mothering arms his mother folded the trembling girl, and her fingers, which trembled still more, crept to Mrs. Aaron Shapiro's very heart and lay there; and up farther, to the coat lapel, where the furs fell away to reveal it, paused there, and drew away again gently, with the blue-and-white celluloid button close to the deep-seamed palm, even pricking it.

"She swears it, Aaron."

"I—I swear it, Aaron."

"You think I believe your lyin', snivelin' ways, you—street-runner, you! You ——"

"Aaron!"

"You got me wrong, Shap. I—I swear it. I am ready to keel over, Shap. I—I can't stand no more. Ain't it enough when I swear? I swear I—I'm sorry, Shap. Just lemme tell you about it though. Anything you want me to say I—I'm ready, Shap. You know my temper, Shap. To mamma I've been bad; but never no more will I be. I—I swear it! Just like a devil was eatin' me it used to be to see you divvy up on lovin' me with her—just like a devil; but no more, Aaron. Nobody can't say nothin' to me against her. Nobody ain't fit to wipe her shoes, Aaron; I ain't—nobody ain't. Ten times—a thousand times, Shap, on my knees I apologize to her, Shap! Ten times on my knees to her and to you, Shap—please, Shap ——"

"If you promise to mind me just this last time, Aaron—to mind me just this last time, Aaron! She's your wife, my boy; she ——"

"I apologize, Shap. I—I—ten thousand times I apologize."

She half staggered toward him, so that the light fell suddenly on the blood-driven face with the red zigzag on the cheek, her gloves torn into slits and her palms bleeding through.

"*Gott*, Gertie! You're bleedin', Gertie! *Ach*, Aaron, run; she's bleedin', Gertie she's bleedin', Aaron. Help me, Aaron!"

Mr. Shapiro leaped forward as though oil had been poured on the flame of his anger.

"I knew she was lyin'! All evenin' I've been sittin' here seein' it. I knew it. I knew it—the skunk! Joy-ridin' with that rat! I knew it! All evenin' I—I've been sittin' here seein' 'em fall into the ditch. I seen 'em both layin' there dead—I seen 'em both layin' there dead—that rat and her! I seen 'em—I—I

"Only it didn't kill her like I wanted it should! I knew it. I knew it. I seen 'em layin' there dead. I seen 'em! Now you get out—you—you get out or I'll ——"

Even as he lunged to her, she fell back gently against his shoulder in a swoon that was as deep as a chasm.

At sunrise Mrs. Shapiro opened her eyes slowly, so that they fell in slow succession on the cool pink-and-white wall paper of her bedroom, then on the lace coverlet drawn up about her neck, and then on Mrs. Shapiro bending over her from the close side of the bed, and on a dark figure couchant beside her. Slowly she returned, with the reluctance of those who emerge from dreamless sleep.

"Ma! That you?"

"It's me, Gertie. See, Aaron, my boy; didn't I tell you that goose grease rubbed on would be fine—didn't I?"

"More, ma; it feels good and—and warm. More, ma—that you, ma? Sure?"

"That's it, dearie; that's it! Take your time and get used to being awake. See—it's me, dearie; and here, next to you, is Aaron, waiting."

"What's this? What's this? Turn it back; turn back the lace cover, ma. Turn it."

"*Ach*, she begins gettin' well by makin' fun with me right away. That's right; I'm glad when you make fun."

"Turn it back and keep my hand, ma—keep it!"

"Look who's here and waiting, Gertie."

"Who, ma?"

"Look, right down here, next to you."

"Who? I—— No—no—no! You stay, ma. No—no—no!"

"It's Aaron, Gertie; and he wants to say good mornin'—Happy New Year! Aaron, Gertie—your Aaron, waitin'."

"No—no!"

"Sh-h-h, dearie! Wake up a little more. See—he ain't goin' to be a bad boy no more. He promised his old mother; and when he promises to mind he—he's a real mind-cut, Gertie—he ——"

"Oh, ma, I—I ——"

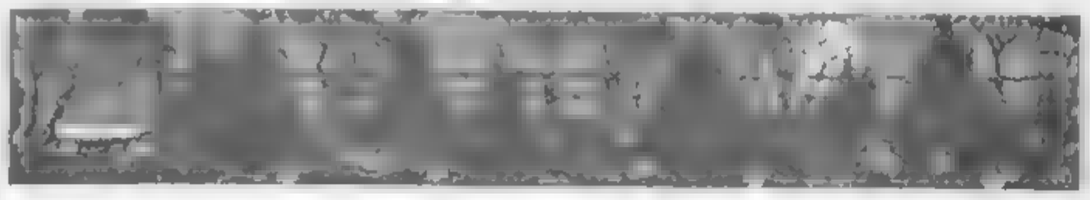
"See—I leave you here with him and go me to bed. I—I'm tired, Gertie. See—it's Aaron; and he wants you all to hisself. Don't you, Aaron?"

The dark figure beside the bed moved closer, still on his knees, and raised the little figure from her pillow so that her criss-crossed cheek lay pat on his breast.

"It's me, Gert! Don't be afraid, baby. Go to bed now, mamma-la. Don't be afraid, Gertie—don't—don't!"

Within Mrs. Shapiro's small room flowed the first sunshine of the New Year—pale, but full of geniality. Across the black-walnut bedstead it poured; across an oval, black-walnut table, ripe with years; across an oval-framed daguerreotype of a gray-bearded head, with lifelike eyes and a skullcap.

Beside it Mrs. Shapiro sat down as if pain had suddenly stabbed her through the heart. And while she waited for it to pass away her eyes smiled at the picture; and toward it her trembling hands went out, and into her outstretched arms her head dropped, with the smile still warm on her face. In the small room it was suddenly quiet—strangely quiet.



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RUGGLES OF RED GAP

(Continued from Page 5)

people who never for a moment would do with us. I shuddered. I despaired. And outside the windows gay Paris laughed and sang in the dance, ever unheeding my plight!

II

IN THAT first sleep how often do we dream that our calamity has been only a dream! It was so in my first moments of awakening. Vestiges of some grotesquely hideous nightmare remained with me. Wearing the shackles of the slave, I had been mowing the corn under the fierce sun that beats down upon the American savannahs. Sickeningly, then, a wind of memory blew upon me and I was alive to my situation. Nor was I forgetful of the plight in which the Honorable George would now find himself. He is as good as lost when not properly looked after. In the ordinary affairs of life he is a simple, trusting, incompetent duffer, if ever there was one. Even in so rudimentary a matter as collar studs he is like a storm-tossed mariner—I mean to say like a chap in a boat on the ocean who doesn't know what sails to pull up nor how to steer the silly rudder. One rather feels exactly that about him.

And now he was bound to go seedy beyond description—like the time at Mentone when he dreamed a system for playing the little horses, after which for a fortnight I was obliged to nurse a well-connected invalid in order that we might last over till the next remittance day. The havoc he managed to wreak among his belongings in that time would scarce be believed should I set it down, not even a single boot properly treed, and his appearance when I was enabled to recover him—my client having behaved most handsomely on the eve of his departure for Spain—being such that I passed him in the hotel lounge without even a nod: climbing-boots, with trousers from his one suit of boating flannels, a blazered golfing waistcoat, his best morning coat with the wide braid, a hunting stock and a motoring cap, with his beard more discursive, as one might say, than I had ever seen it. If I disclose this thing it is only that my fears for him may be comprehended when I pictured him being permanently out of hand.

Meditating thus bitterly I had but finished dressing when I was startled by a knock on my door, and by the entrance to my summons of the elder and more subdued Floud, he of the drooping mustaches and the mournful eyes of pale blue. One glance at his attire brought freshly to my mind the atrocious difficulties of my new situation. I may be credited or not, but combined with tan boots and wretchedly fitting trousers of a purple hue he wore a black frock coat revealing far, far too much of a blue satin "made" cravat on which was painted a cluster of tiny white flowers—lilies of the valley I should say. Unbelievably, above this monstrous mélange was a rather low-crowned bowler hat.

Hardly repressing a shudder I bowed, whereupon he advanced solemnly to me and put out his hand. To cover the embarrassing situation tactfully I extended my own and we actually shook hands, although my clasp was limply quite formal.

"How do you do, Mr. Ruggles!" he began.

I bowed again, but speech failed me.

"She sent me over to get you," he went on. He uttered the word "she" with such profound awe that I knew he could mean none other than Mrs. Effie. It was most extraordinary, but I dare say only what was to have been expected from persons of this sort. In any good-class club or among gentlemen at large it is customary to allow one at least twenty-four hours for the payment of one's gambling debts. Yet here I was being collected by the winner at so early an hour as half after seven. If I had been a five-pound note instead of myself, I fancy it would have been quite the same. These Americans would most indecently have sent for their winnings before the Honorable George had awakened. One would have thought they had expected him to refuse payment of me after losing me the night before. How little they seemed to realize that we were both intending to be dead sportsmen!

"Very good, sir," I said; "but I trust I may be allowed to brew the Honorable George his tea before leaving. I'd hardly like to trust him alone with it, sir."

"Yes, sir," he said, so respectfully that it gave me an odd feeling. "Take your time, Mr. Ruggles. I don't know as I am in any hurry on my own account. It's only account of her."

I trust it will be remembered that in reporting this person's speeches I am making an earnest effort to set them down word for word in all their terrific peculiarities. I mean to say I would not be held accountable for his phrasing; and if I corrected his speech, as of course the tendency is, our identities might become confused. I hope this will be understood when I report him as saying things in ways one doesn't word them. I mean to say that it should not be thought that I would say them in this way if it chanced that I were saying the same things in my proper person. I fancy this should now be plain.

"Very well, sir," I said.

"If it was me," he went on, "I wouldn't want you a little bit. But it's her. She's got her mind made up to do the right thing and have us all be somebody, and when she makes her mind up ——" He hesitated, and studied the ceiling for some seconds. "Believe me," he continued, "Mrs. Effie is some wildcat!"

"Yes, sir—some wildcat," I repeated.

"Believe me, Bill," he said again, quaintly addressing me by a name not my own, "believe me, she'd fight a rattlesnake and give it the first two bites."

Again let it be recalled that I put down this extraordinary speech exactly as I heard it. I thought to detect in it that grotesque exaggeration with which the Americans so distressingly embellish their humor. I mean to say it could hardly have been meant in all seriousness. So far as my researches have extended the rattlesnake is an invariably poisonous reptile. Fancy giving one so downright an advantage as the first two bites, or even one bite, although I believe the thing does not in fact bite at all, but does one down with its forked tongue, of which there is an excellent drawing in my little volume, Inquire Within; One Thousand Useful Facts.

"Yes, sir," I replied, somewhat at a loss. "Quite so, sir!"

"I just thought I'd wise you up beforehand."

"Thank you, sir," I said, for his intention beneath the weird jargon was somehow benevolent. "And if you'll be good enough to wait until I have taken tea to the Honorable George ——"

"How is the judge this morning?" he broke in.

"The judge, sir?" I was at a loss, until he gestured toward the room of the Honorable George.

"Yes, the judge. Ain't he a justice of the peace or something?"

"But no, sir; not at all, sir."

"Then what do you call him 'Honorable' for, if he ain't a judge or something?"

"Well, sir, it's done, sir," I explained; but I fear he was unable to catch my meaning, for a moment later—the Honorable George, hearing our voices, had thrown a boot smartly against the door—he was addressing him as "Judge" and thereafter continued to do so, nor did the Honorable George seem to make any moment of being thus miscalled.

I served the Ceylon tea together with biscuits and marmalade, the while our caller chatted nervously. He had, it appeared, procured his own breakfast while on his way to us.

"I got to have my ham and eggs of a morning," he confided; "but she won't let me have anything at that hotel but a Continental breakfast, which is nothing but coffee and toast and some of that there sauce you're eating. She says when I'm on the Continent I got to eat a Continental breakfast, because that's the smart thing to do, and not stuff myself like I was on the ranch. But I got that game beat both ways from the jack. I duck out every morning before she's up. I found a place where you can get regular ham and eggs."

"Regular ham and eggs?" murmured the Honorable George.

"French ham and eggs is a joke. They put a slice of boiled ham in a little dish, slosh a couple of eggs on it and tuck the dish into the oven a few minutes. Say, they won't ever believe that back in Red Gap when I tell it. But I found this here little place where they do it right, account of Americans having made trouble there so

much over the other way. But mind you don't let on to her," he warned me suddenly.

"Certainly not, sir," I said. "Trust me to be discreet, sir."

"All right then. May be we'll get on better than what I thought we would. I was looking for trouble with you, the way she's been talking about what you'd do for me."

"I trust matters will be pleasant, sir," I replied.

"I can be pushed just so far," he curiously warned me, "and no farther—not by any man that wears hair."

"Yes, sir," I said again, wondering what the wearing of hair might mean to this process of pushing him, and feeling rather absurdly glad that my own face is smoothly shaven.

"You'll find Ruggles fair enough after you've got used to his way," put in the Honorable George.

"All right, judge, and remember it wasn't my doings," said my new employer, rising and pulling down to his ears his fearful bowler hat. "And now we better report to her before she does a hot-foot over here. You can pack your grip later in the day," he added to me.

"Pack my grip—yes, sir," I said numbly, for I was on the tick of leaving the Honorable George helpless in bed. In a voice that I fear was broken I spoke of clothes for the day's wear, which I had laid out for him the night before. He waved a hand bravely at us and sank back into his pillow as my new employer led me forth. There had been barely a glance between us to betoken the dreadfulness of the moment.

At our door I was pleased to note that a taximeter cab awaited us. I had acutely dreaded a walk through the streets, even of Paris, with my new employer garbed as he was. The blue satin cravat of itself would have been bound to insure us more attention than one would care for. I fear we were both somewhat moody during the short ride. Each of us seemed to have matters of weight to reflect upon. Only upon reaching our destination did my companion brighten a bit. For a fare of five francs and forty centimes he gave the driver a ten-franc piece and waited for no change.

"I always get round them that way," he said with an expression of the brightest cunning. "She used to have the laugh on me because I got so much counterfeit money handed to me. Now I don't take any change at all."

"Yes, sir," I said. "Quite right, sir."

"There's more than one way to skin a cat," he added as we ascended to the Flouds' drawing-room—though why his mind should have flown to this brutal sport, if it be a sport, was quite beyond me. At the door he paused and hissed at me: "Remember, no matter what she says, if you treat me white I'll treat you white." And before I could frame any suitable response to this puzzling announcement he had opened the door and pushed me in, almost before I could remove my cap.

Seated at the table over coffee and rolls was Mrs. Effie. Her face brightened as she saw me, then froze to disapproval as her glance rested upon him I was to know as Cousin Egbert. I saw her capable mouth set in a straight line of determination.

"You did your very worst, didn't you?" she began. "But sit down and eat your breakfast. He'll soon change that." She turned to me. "Now, Ruggles, I hope you understand the situation, and I'm sure I can trust you to take no nonsense from him. You see plainly what you've got to do. I let him dress to suit himself this morning so that you could know the worst at once. Take a good look at him—shoes, coat, hat—that dreadful cravat!"

"I call this a right pretty necktie," mumbled her victim over a crust of toast. She had poured coffee for him.

"You hear that!" she asked me.

I bowed sympathetically.

"What does he look like?" she insisted. "Just tell him for his own good, please."

But this I could not do. True enough, during our short ride he had been reminding me of one of a pair of cross-talk comedians I had once seen in a music hall. This of course was not a thing one could say.

"I dare say, madam, he could be smartened up a bit. If I might take him to some good-class shop ——"

"And burn the things he's got on ——" she broke in.

"Not this here necktie," interrupted Cousin Egbert rather stubbornly. "It was give to me by Jeff Tuttle's littlest girl last Christmas; and this here Prince Albert coat—what's the matter of it, I'd like to know? It come right from the One-Price Clothing Store at Red Gap, and it's plenty good to go to funerals in ——"

"And then to a barber's shop with him," went on Mrs. Effie, who had paid no heed to his outburst. "Get him done right for once."

Her relative continued to nibble nervously at a bit of toast.

"I've done something with him myself," she said, watching him narrowly. "At first he insisted on having a whole bill of fare for breakfast, but I put my foot down and now he's satisfied with the Continental breakfast. That goes to show he has something in him, if we can only bring it out."

"Something in him, indeed, yes, madam!" I assented; and Cousin Egbert, turning to me, winked heavily.

"I want him to look like some one," she resumed, "and I think you're the man can make him if you're firm with him; but you'll have to be firm because he's full of tricks. If he starts any rough stuff just come to me."

"Quite so, madam," I said; but I felt I was blushing with shame at hearing one of my own sex so slanged by a woman. That sort of thing would never do with us. And yet there was something about this woman—something weirdly authoritative. She showed rather well in the morning light, her gray eyes crackling as she talked. She was wearing a most elaborate peignoir, and of course she should not have worn the diamonds; it seemed almost too much like the morning hour of a stage favorite; but still one felt that when she talked one would do well to listen.

Hereupon Cousin Egbert startled me once more.

"Won't you set up and have something with us, Mr. Ruggles?" he asked me.

I looked away, affecting not to have heard, and could feel Mrs. Effie scowling at him. He coughed into his cup and sprayed coffee well over himself. His intention had been obvious in the main, though exactly what he had meant by setting up I couldn't fancy—as if I had been a performing poodle!

The moment's embarrassment was well covered by Mrs. Effie, who again renewed her instructions, and from an escritoire brought me a sheaf of the pretentiously printed sheets that the French use in place of our bank notes.

"You will spare no expense," she directed; "and don't let me see him again until he looks like some one. Try to have him back here by five. Some very smart friends of ours are coming for tea."

"I won't drink tea at that outlandish hour for anyone," said Cousin Egbert rather snappishly.

"You will at least refuse it like a man of the world, I hope," she replied icily, and he drooped submissive once more. "You see?" she added to me.

"Quite so, madam," I said, and resolved to be firm and thorough with Cousin Egbert. In a way I was put upon my mettle. I swore to make him look like some one. Moreover, I now saw that his half-veiled threats of rebellion to me had been pure swank. I had in turn but to threaten to report him to this woman and he would be as clay in my hands.

I presently had him tucked into a closed taxicab, half-heartedly muttering expostulations and protests to which I paid not the least heed. During my strolls I had observed in what would have been Regent Street at home a rather good-class shop with an English name, and to this I now proceeded with my charge. I am afraid I rather hustled him across the pavement and into the shop, not knowing what tricks he might be up to, and not until he was well to the back did I attempt to explain myself to the shop-walker who had followed us. To him I then gave details of my charge's escape from a burning hotel the previous night, which accounted for his extraordinary garb of the moment, he having been obliged to accept the loan of garments that neither fitted him nor harmonized with one another. I mean to say I did not care to have the chap suspect we would don tan boots, a frock coat and bowler hat except under the most tremendous compulsion.

Cousin Egbert stared at me open-mouthed during this recital, but the shop-walker was only too readily convinced, as indeed who would not have been, and called an intelligent assistant to relieve our distress. With his help I swiftly selected an outfit that was not half bad for ready-to-wear garments. There was a black morning coat, snug at the waist, moderately broad

(Here's The Answer)

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Campbell's SOUPS

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To Mothers of Little Girls

Lettie Lane, the paper-doll playmate of the little ladies of America, reappears in January in *The Ladies' Home Journal.* Children everywhere will spend happy hours cutting her out with scissors—Lettie herself and her eight hats and dresses. And then comes the fun of dressing her up again and again for her varied "social engagements."

Lettie Lane is one of the most popular features *The Ladies' Home Journal* has ever offered to its readers. She appeared originally five years ago.

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Looking Into Other Women's Homes

How You Can Tell a Fresh Egg

What the New Skirt is Like

Price 15 cents the copy. You can obtain yours from any newsdealer or from any *Ladies' Home Journal* boy.

The Curtis Publishing Company

Philadelphia Pennsylvania

at the shoulders, closing with two buttons, its skirt sharply cut away from the lower button and reaching to the bend of the knee. The lapels were, of course, soft-rolled and joined the collar with a triangular notch. It is a coat of immense character when properly worn, and I was delighted to observe in the trying on that Cousin Egbert filled it rather smartly. Moreover, he submitted more meekly than I had hoped. The trousers I selected were of gray cloth faintly striped, the waistcoat being of the same material as the coat, relieved at the neck opening by an edging of white.

With the boots I had rather more trouble, as he refused to wear the patent leathers that I selected, together with the pearl gray spats, until I grimly requested the telephone assistant to put me through to the hotel, desiring to speak to Mrs. Senator Floud. This brought him round—although muttering—and I had less trouble with shirts, collars and cravats. I chose a shirt of white piqué, a wing collar with small, square-cornered tabs, and a pearl ascot.

Then in a cabinet I superintended Cousin Egbert's change of raiment. We clashed again in the matter of sock suspenders, which I was astounded to observe he did not possess. He insisted that he had never worn them—garters he called them—and never would if he were shot for it, so I decided to be content with what I had already gained.

By dint of urging and threatening I at length achieved my groundwork and was more than a little pleased with my effect, as was the shop-assistant after I had tied the pearl ascot and adjusted a quiet tie pin of my own choosing.

"Now I hope you're satisfied," growled my charge, seizing his bowler hat and edging off.

"By no means," I said coldly. "The hat, if you please, sir."

He gave it up rebelliously, and I had again to threaten him with the telephone before he would submit to a top hat with a moderate bell and broad brim. Surveying this in the glass, however, he became perceptibly reconciled. It was plain that he rather fancied it, though as yet he wore it consciously and would turn his head slowly and painfully, as if his neck were stiffened. Having chosen the proper gloves I was, I repeat, more than pleased with this severely simple scheme of black, white and gray. I felt I had been wise to resist any tendency to color, even to the most delicate of pastel tints. My last selection was a smartish Malacca stick, the ideal stick for town wear, which I thrust into the defenseless hands of my client.

"And now, sir," I said firmly, "it is but a step to a barber's shop where English is spoken." And ruefully he accompanied me. I dare say by that time he had discovered that I was not to be trifled with, for during his hour in the barber's chair he did not once rebel openly. Only at times would he roll his eyes to mine in dumb appeal. There was in them something of the confiding helplessness I had noted in the eyes of an old setter at Chaynes-Wotten when I had been called upon to assist the undergardener in chloroforming him. I mean to say the dog had jolly well known something terrible was being done to him, yet his eyes seemed to say he knew it must be all for the best and that he trusted us.

It was this look I caught as I gave directions about the trimming of the hair, and especially when I directed that something radical should be done to the long, grayish mustache that fell to each side of his chin in the form of a horseshoe. I myself was puzzled by this difficulty, but the barber solved it rather neatly, I thought, after a whispered consultation with me. He snipped a bit off each end and then stoutly waxed the whole affair until the ends stood stiffly out, with distinct military implications.

I shall never forget and indeed I was not a little touched by the look of quivering anguish in the eyes of my client when he first beheld this novel effect. And yet when we were once more in the street I could not but admit that the change was worth all it had cost him in suffering. Strangely, he now looked like some one. I cannot say that his carriage was all that it should have been and he was still conscious of his smart attire, but I nevertheless felt a distinct thrill of pride in my own work and was eager to reveal him to Mrs. Effie in his new guise.

But first he would have luncheon—dinner he called it—and I was not averse to this, for I had put in a long and trying morning. I went with him to the little restaurant where Americans had made so much trouble about ham and eggs, and there he insisted that I join him in chops and potatoes and ale. I thought it only proper then to point out to him that there were certain differences in our walks of life which should be more or less denoted by his manner of addressing me. Among other things, he should not address me as Mr. Ruggles, nor was it customary for a valet to eat at the same table with his master. He seemed much interested in these distinctions and thereupon addressed me as Colonel, which was, of course, quite absurd; but this I could not make him see. Thereafter I may say that he called me impartially either Colonel or Bill. This was a situation that I had never before been obliged to meet, and I found it trying in the extreme. He was a chap who seemed ready to pal up with anyone, and I could not but believe the strange assertion I had so often heard that in America one never knows who is one's superior. Fancy that! It would never do with us. I could only determine to be on my guard.

Our luncheon done he consented to accompany me to the hotel of the Honorable George, whence I wished to remove my belongings. I should have preferred to go alone, but I was too fearful of what he might do to himself or his clothes in my absence.

We found the Honorable George still in bed, as I had feared. He had, it seemed, been unable to discover his collar studs, which, though I had placed them in a fresh shirt for him, he had carelessly covered with a blanket. Begging Cousin Egbert to be seated in my room, I did a few of the more obvious things required by my late master.

"You'd leave me here like a rat in a trap," he said reproachfully; which I thought almost quite a little unjust. I mean to say it had all been his own doing, he having lost me in the game of drawing poker, so why should he row me about it now? I silently laid out the shirt once more.

"You might have told me where I'm to find my brown tweeds and the body linen."

Again he was addressing me as if I had voluntarily left him without notice, but I observed that he was still mildly speckled from the night before, so I handed him the fruit lozenges, and went to pack my own box. Cousin Egbert I found sitting as I had left him on the edge of a chair, carefully holding his hat, stick and gloves and staring into the wall. He had promised me faithfully not to fumble with his cravat, and evidently he had not once stirred. I packed my box swiftly—my grip as he called it—and we were presently off once more, without another sight of the Honorable George, who was to join us at tea. I could hear him moving about, using rather ultrafrightful language, but I lacked heart for further speech with him at the moment.

An hour later in the Floud drawing-room I had the supreme satisfaction of displaying to Mrs. Effie the happy changes I had been able to effect in my charge. Posing him, I knocked at the door of her chamber. She came at once and drew a long breath as she surveyed him, from varnished boots, spats and coat to top hat, which he still wore. He leaned rather well on his stick, the hand to his hip, the elbow out, while the other hand lightly held his gloves. A moment she looked, then gave a low cry of wonder and delight, so that I felt repaid for my trouble. Indeed as she faced me to thank me I could see that her eyes were dimmed.

"Wonderful!" she exclaimed. "Now he looks like some one!" And I distinctly perceived that only just in time did she repress an impulse to grasp me by the hand. Under the circumstances I am not sure that I wouldn't have overlooked the lapse had she yielded to it. "Wonderful!" she said again.

Hereupon Cousin Egbert, much embarrassed, leaned his stick against the wall; the stick fell and in reaching down for it his hat fell and in reaching for that he dropped his gloves; but I soon restored him to order and he was safely seated where he might be studied in further detail, especially as to his mustaches, which I had considered rather the supreme touch.

"He looks exactly like some well-known clubman," exclaimed Mrs. Effie.

Her relative growled as if he were quite ready to savage her.

"Like a man about town," she murmured. "Who would have thought he had it in him until you brought it out?"

I knew then that we two should understand each other.

The slight tension was here relieved by two of the hotel servants who brought tea things. At a nod from Mrs. Effie I directed the laying out of these.

At that moment came the other Floud—he of the eyebrows—and a cousin cub called Elmer, who I understood studied art. I became aware that they were both suddenly engaged and silenced by the sight of Cousin Egbert. I caught their amazed stares, and then terrifically they broke into gales of laughter. The cub threw himself on a couch, waving his feet in the air and holding his middle as if he'd suffered a sudden acute dyspepsia, while the elder threw his head back and shrieked hysterically. Cousin Egbert merely glared at them, and, endeavoring to stroke his mustache, succeeded in unwaxing one side of it so that it at once hung limply down his chin, whereat they renewed their boorishness. The elder Floud was now quite dangerously purple and the cub on the couch was shrieking: "No matter how dark the clouds, remember she is still your stepmother"—or words to some such silly effect as that. How it might have ended I hardly dare conjecture—perhaps Cousin Egbert would presently have roughed them—but a knock sounded, and it became my duty to open our door upon other guests, women mostly; Americans in Paris; that sort of thing.

I served the tea amid their babble. The Honorable George was shown up a bit later, having done to himself quite all I thought he might in the matter of dress. In spite of serious discrepancies in his attire, however, I saw that Mrs. Effie meant to lionize him tremendously.

With vast ceremony he was presented to her guests—the Honorable George Augustus Vane-Basingwell, brother of his Lordship, Earl of Brinstead.

In spite of my aversion to the American wilderness I felt a bit of professional pride in reflecting that my first day in this new service was about to end so auspiciously. Yet even in that moment, being as yet unfamiliar with the rooms' lesser furniture, I stumbled slightly against a hassock hid from me by the tray I carried. A cup of tea was lost, though my recovery was quick. Too late I observed that the hitherto self-effacing Cousin Egbert was in range of my clumsiness.

"There goes tea all over my new pants," he said in a high, pained voice.

"Sorry indeed, sir," said I, a ready napkin in hand. "Let me dry it, sir!"

"Yes, sir; I fancy quite so, sir," said he.

I most truly would have liked to shake him smartly for this. I saw that my work was cut out for me among these Americans, from whom at their best one expects so little.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Don't Worry!

"DON'T WORRY!" signs over the office desk have taken on a new meaning lately, owing to the discovery of the definite method by which worry injures the health. Blame for the evil effects of worry is now placed on the ductless glands of the body—those little organs hidden in various parts of the human anatomy that are constantly busy manufacturing small quantities of strange chemicals to pour into the blood, which are now held responsible for many troubles.

It has been proved that emotions and other operations of the brain often have an effect on these ductless glands, causing them to work overtime.

Dr. E. D. Forest, of Tufts Medical School, has definitely shown that worry is followed by increased action in a number of these strange glands, obviously stimulated by the brain. It is well known that the secretions of these glands have an active effect on the heart, the brain, the blood and the stomach. Thus, the connection between worry and poor health seems to be fairly well established.

Doctor Forest found that adrenalin, the substance manufactured by the adrenals, always appeared in increased quantities during or after a spell of worry. The secretion of the pituitary body also increased and other glands were proved to join in the excitement of the occasion.

When these glands are thrown out of kilter the secretions upset the regular processes of the stomach and the brain; and this will become noticeable in poor digestion and sleeplessness, for instance, and many other serious troubles not so noticeable.

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(Continued from Page 10)

"We're going to act just opposite to what the Consolidated expects. We'll make Wharton think we anticipated this very move of his. I'll take the first train to Huron and get a New York draft for forty thousand dollars. I will leave there to-night and be in Chicago to-morrow morning. Then I'll walk in on Hargrave, pay up our note and get back our collateral. That 'reserved right to cancel' is only a blind. Wharton thinks he has thrown dust in our eyes with his mysterious clause. He's just using it as a pretext to stall us off until our note comes due and he can get hold of our contracts and patents at a forced sale of the collateral. He's sure that no other bank would loan us the money now that the special controllers we've made up are worth no more than junk unless he takes them. We can't sell them to anybody else, because they all are wired according to Consolidated patent circuit diagrams that we contracted never to use except on machines furnished to the Consolidated Electric Company.

"It's a mighty cunning trap Wharton built for us. He'd have caught us sure if we hadn't taken the precaution to dig a way out before we went into it. Why, without the contract papers we can't even make a damage case against that gang of pirates. But we're going to fool Wharton this time. We'll get our collateral back right now. We won't wait until our note is due in Chicago. We'll show him we've got the money on the nail.

"And we'll surprise old Captain Kidd in another way too. We won't peep to him about this cancellation. He expects us to telegraph, or to call up on long distance, or to go chasing down to New York lickety-split to see him. We won't open our heads; we'll just stand pat. When he hears from Chicago to-morrow that we've paid our note without a bleat and he gets no protest from us in answer to this letter of Lewis', he'll tumble that we have been next to his little game all along and were fully prepared for what he has done. That puts the next move up to him and he will be so puzzled he won't know what to do."

"Do you feel sure the Consolidated will have to take the machines off our hands in the end?" Conroy pleaded for the gleam of hope he saw.

"They can't open that Pittsburgh plant without them. Maybe we are mice, but we'll make the old cat come to his milk this time."

Conroy smiled wanly. He looked as if he felt a little less worried, but he had no more initiative than a lump of putty. Day realized that he, himself, would have to make all the preparations for the siege that was about to begin.

He hurried out into the factory, where he issued the necessary orders that would stop all work on the Consolidated Electric Company machines. The junior partner did not intend to tie up in dead stock a cent more than was necessary. His final instruction to Conroy before he started for the train was that not a word of their plans must be hinted to anyone.

Early next morning Day was back in Lakeport. As he came up the street to the factory he saw his partner standing in the office doorway just where he had left him.

"Hello, Will! Have you been waiting there for me all night?" he joked.

"Did you find out anything?" Conroy voiced his tense anxiety.

"Wait until we get inside."

The moment they were secure in the privacy of their inner office Day began his report: "I walked in on Hargrave about ten o'clock. He barely shook hands, he was so brusque. He asked me right off what I wanted and his tone was very sharp. Of course he thought I'd come to ask for an extension of time on our note, and he was all ready to turn me down cold.

"I didn't beat about the bush either. I told him I was ready to pay our forty thousand dollars, although it wasn't due just yet. Then I planked down the bank draft I got from Cameron in Huron. Hargrave looked at it nearly half a minute before he picked it up. He acted as if he were stunned and his face got white first, then red. He's only an assistant cashier and didn't know what to do. So he stammered that he'd have to see the president about it. He hustled off with the draft as if it were a bomb timed to explode in about a minute.

"He was gone over a quarter of an hour. When he came back he was like a wilted collar that just had been restarched and ironed. He would have been insolent if he'd been able to look me square in the eye. He slammed our canceled note and the collateral on the counter. Simply to let him know there wasn't anything we wouldn't suspect him and his crowd of, I stood there and went over every line of the contract and requisition to make sure that no changes had been made anywhere. Finally I folded the papers. When I put them in my pocket I told Hargrave they seemed intact. I thought he was going to choke after I said that. I didn't stop to shake hands."

Day took a document envelope from his pocket and extracted a paper. "I found the joker, Will," he informed Conroy calmly. "It is a slick piece of work." He indicated a paragraph printed midway in the list of conditions on the back of requisition 118697-P, and read: "'This requisition is not an order for the material listed thereon, and is subject to cancellation any time prior to shipment.'"

He handed the paper to his partner and proceeded: "That clause was inserted in this particular case to catch us napping. Of course we never noticed it down in the middle of the print on the back. The requisition looks superficially like any other Consolidated form. Wharton knew there wasn't one chance in a thousand that we'd examine the printed conditions. Before we got this order the Consolidated had given us more than twenty others on the same kind of blank, except for that one clause, in order to get us used to their form. They have a legal right to cancel and we can't force them to take the machines."

Conroy was blue and limp as if his heart had stopped beating. The faint whisper that parted his lips was like a dying breath.

"We're ruined!"

"Not at all!" Day instantly retorted. His crackling denial galvanically stiffened the spineless man across the table. "The Consolidated can't start its Pittsburgh plant without controllers. It is nearly six months yet before our note in Huron falls due. Meantime we'll have to scratch together enough money to pay what we owe the metal mills. We can manage that by close collections and by cutting down our raw material stock to rock bottom. I made some inquiries among the trade in Chicago and found that Wharton plans to begin running in Pittsburgh on the first of March. All we have to do is hold our nerve a little while and that order will be reinstated. When he sees we've slipped out of his clutches the old pirate will swear his head off, but he'll telegraph us to ship those controllers."

Conroy breathed again, as if a pulmotor had been used on him. But his respite from despair was brief. Day happened to notice on the table a copy of an electrical magazine that had arrived in the mail only that morning. He opened the paper and scanned the columns.

"Maybe there's a news item in here about the new Pittsburgh plant," he guessed. In a minute or two he found what he sought. "Yes, here it is. Let's see if it mentions the date they'll start up." All at once Day's face went ashen. In a hoarse whisper he read: "'The controllers will be of a new type designed by the engineers of the Consolidated Electric Company especially for this installation. They now are being assembled in the New York factory.'"

Day caught at the edge of the table to support himself; his knees almost gave way under him.

"We never thought of that, Will! He's—got—us—after—all!"

The moment after the junior partner confessed defeat he denied it vehemently, passionately: "No, he hasn't got us! Not for six months anyway. We've lost fifty thousand dollars, but we've saved our patent. We'll beg, borrow, or steal enough money to pay all our debts. We'll probably have to sacrifice our machinery and stock and start business over again in a little shop. But Wharton's not going to get that patent!"

Day stepped quickly round the table and thumped his partner's shoulder.

"Buck up, Bill, old fellow!" he exhorted. "We'll beat Wharton yet. His engineers haven't designed a controller that suits him or he wouldn't have taken such pains to trap us. Let's sell everything else we own

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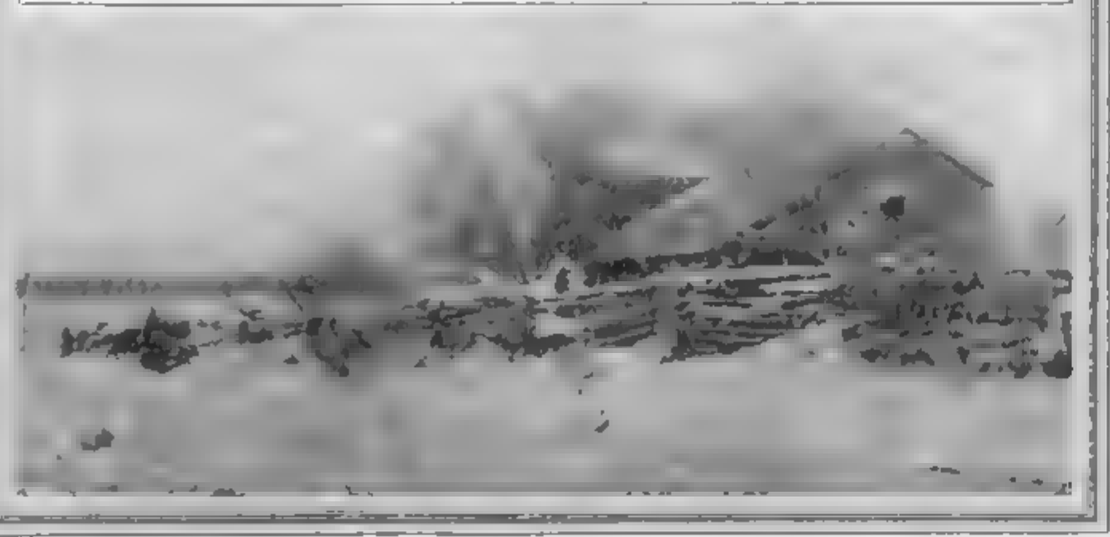

excepting our patent and those machines we have made up for Pittsburgh. The controllers wouldn't bring five thousand dollars as junk anyway. I'll bet you the Consolidated buys them inside of a year. Are you on?"

"I'll die game!" gasped Conroy.

The weeks that followed were longer than any Conroy and Day ever had lived, yet in a sense they were all too short. The partners were like two condemned men awaiting execution. The senior's flesh withered. In a month Conroy had lost his plumpness and looked gaunt. Day aged. His vigor wasted away as a caged lion's strength is spent by futile pacings behind bars. The junior partner sought continually to find a way out of the trap, but without success. Though he did not admit it to his associate, he realized that even the sacrifice of all their assets scarcely would avail to pay the firm's debts.

They had ventured on thin ice and had broken through into the depths. If they should sink into bankruptcy at the end of their struggle they probably would lose everything—their patent included.

Still neither cried for help. The yellow streak in Conroy, chilled by the waters of adversity, was tempered to the true blue of steel. As they grimly strained side by side to save their business lives, Day grew to respect anew the old friend whom lately he had begun to hold in contempt.

The morning of the fifteenth of December the senior partner went down town on some errands. Day sat at his desk in the private office alone. The stenographer came in and handed him a card.

"Wharton!" he exclaimed.

He gritted his teeth. A blaze leaped in his eyes. So the old scoundrel thought the firm probably was readier to take a pittance than to lose all! Doubtless he had come to offer a robber-baron's hard terms for the remnants of their property to which his victims yet clung. Day, swollen with hate for the magnate, strode to the door.

"Come in, Wharton!" He flung his ringing defiance like a David to a Goliath.

The stenographer prudently slipped out as the president of the Consolidated Electric Company entered the private office.

"Good morning, Mr. Day," Wharton greeted suavely. He offered his hand.

"Not yet!" The junior partner bluntly refused to pretend amenity. "You shook hands with me in New York when we signed that contract. State your business—don't waste any time."

Wharton had elbowed and fought his way to the head of the electrical trust. His finer feelings were calloused. Uninvited he now sat down beside the table. The junior partner's evident animosity in no wise disconcerted him. No man ever had called the unscrupulous old pirate a coward.

"You and your partner are in deep water," he stated a fact with unhesitating directness. "I've brought you a life preserver. I don't pretend that I have any friendly interest in you and Conroy; but while you are drowning you might lose some papers that it would be worth while for us to own. I'll give you fifty thousand dollars for your patent. We have perfected a machine ourselves, and your rights are valueless unless we buy apparatus from you. You can't build your controllers without our circuits that you have contracted not to furnish to anybody else."

Day held himself in check. He affected to consider the offer. "That would just about let us out even on that lot of machines we made up for your Pittsburgh plant," he remarked sarcastically. "You'll have to do a little better than that."

"I will listen to your counter-proposal," Wharton fenced.

"No you won't! You're not ready for it—yet!" Day answered.

The visitor winced ever so slightly, but Day caught the expression that flickered on and off his face. Instantly the junior partner was alert for any other signs of Wharton's thoughts.

"What do you mean by 'yet'?" inquired the president of the trust with a caustic smile that failed to burn out his eagerness for the answer.

"Nothing—yet!" Day returned the same enigma.

Through narrowed lids Wharton peered at him fiercely.

"When," the sleek old man purred, "will you be ready to talk terms?"

"After you've paid for all the controllers we now have made up waiting for you."

The telltale muscles about Wharton's gray eyes twitched a little again. Day was watching keenly and saw the brief contraction.

"You think, then," the magnate sneered, "we'll do that?"

"I know it!" bluffed the junior partner. He read in a flash the other man's wavering look and decided intuitively to risk the firm's entire stake on his own cards. "I've known it all along. In fact Conroy and I have just been waiting for you to find it out yourself. We've never had any doubt that our controllers would go in at Pittsburgh. That story you put in the magazine about your engineers' getting up a new design for you didn't fool us in the least."

Unexpectedly the shrewd old man asked, "Do you play poker, Mr. Day?"

The question was so very pat that the junior partner grinned.

"Occasionally," he admitted. Then he put on his poker face of inscrutability.

"So do I," Wharton confessed dryly.

The two men eyed each other for a minute. The New Yorker abruptly made the gesture of a confirmed gambler philosophically throwing down a beaten hand of cards.

"You win the pot," he yielded laconically, "though I don't believe you've got even openers. You can ship those machines to Pittsburgh." He reached into his pocket and tossed a paper to Day.

Only a poker player can understand to the full the junior partner's feeling of exultation. Only a poker player will believe that the thrill of triumph was not indicated on his face. Only a poker player who has raked in a big pot on a four flush is able to appreciate why Day felt in honor bound to lie about his own hand.

"We planned to store those controllers for you a little longer, but you can have them now if it'll be any accommodation, Mr. Wharton." The junior partner leisurely opened and read the letter that his caller had handed to him. Then he passed it back. "You still think we were bluffing, eh?" he drawled. "I'll prove we weren't. We just were waiting for you to chip in a little more."

He opened a drawer of his desk and found the contract between the Consolidated Electric Company and Conroy & Day. He pointed out a clause.

"I guess you've forgotten about that," he suggested with the utmost nonchalance. "If I remember the gist of it correctly we reserved the right to charge a bonus for immediate deliveries of apparatus from stock. We'll have to ask you to pay ten per cent extra on those machines if we ship them at once."

The old man sprang to his feet. As quick as lightning he caught the point. "But that is just reinstating the old order!" he protested.

"The contract doesn't say you reserved that right, Mr. Wharton. Your printed requisition blank doesn't say you reserved that right. You ought to hire a better lawyer, my friend."

The face of the president of the great trust was white.

"It's a hold-up!" he snarled. "I'll ——"

"No—merely a lesson!" Day interrupted laughingly. "I only wanted to convince you we hadn't been bluffing. Of course I wouldn't rob a friend. You just give us a certified check in advance for those controllers at the contract prices, and we'll throw off the bonus this time."

He offered his hand.

Wharton grabbed it and thrust his other hand into his pocket.

"I brought a bank draft with me," he said. "Take it quick! I want to get back to New York where I can feel safe."

The door opened and Conroy came in.

"Hello, Will!" cried Day. "This is Mr. Wharton. We've just fixed up that little matter about the Pittsburgh order. Here's the New York draft."

The president of the Consolidated Electric Company peered at the bewildered face of the senior partner. Then he whirled accusingly to Day.

"You were bluffing!" he cried.

"No post-mortems allowed!" Day said with a grin.

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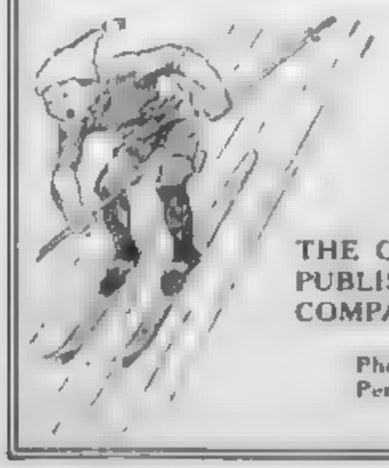

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GOOD OLD DOC LIGMORE

By Holman Day

VI— Continued

AT THE end of a week Doctor Ligmore's guests were thoroughly grounded in their conviction that they were under the roof-tree of a saint and that the thin-lipped old wife who toiled for them in the kitchen was a martyr.

They had plenty of time and opportunity to talk this over in their attic room; they never left those four walls except to slip down to their meals or to sit with the Doctor in his little office. They even kept away from the windows of their room. Only on the darkest nights did they dodge into the orchard for a leg-stretch and a breath of air.

"He's a saint!" reaffirmed Rurbot, dwelling again on the eternal topic of the good Old Doc. He lay on the bed, staring through the dormer window at the patch of sky framed there. "I like to hear him talk about what he has done for his people round here. It is uplifting."

"That's so," confessed Marston. He was teetering astride the back of a chair and manicuring his nails.

"Being here is making better men of us."

"I feel that way; but ——"

"It was no flippy handshake and 'I hope you'll do well!' in our case. He has taken us right home."

"Yes; but how long are we going to stay here? You and I don't seem to be getting anywhere in this business."

"Give the good Old Doc time, man."

"I'm a good waiter. I'm grateful; but—good gorry! Rurbot—we're penned up in here closer than we were in the State Prison. At least, we did get out of a cell and into the shop."

"You're not slurring a good home, are you?"

"Of course not; but, after five years or so in prison, this kind of life isn't very rollicking," said Marston irritably. "It's getting on my nerves. The Doctor spends all his time talking about himself; he hasn't said a word as to what he expects to do for us."

"I figure he wants us to rest up and get the bracing atmosphere of home life before we strike out."

"I'm all rested," said Marston. "I've got the fidgets in my legs. And, if he's as poor as he says he is, I don't see how he is going to help us any; and I don't believe we ought to saddle ourselves on him. Let's pike out!"

"I'm no grafter; but I won't do anything to hurt his feelings," insisted Rurbot. "He knows what's good for us—and he'll do it."

"He's a kind-hearted old man and is probably doing his best; but I think having an extra one sort of pushed onto him has tipped his plans upside down. Remember how he acted when Moran butted in? I think I'll move on, at any rate. Really, he can't take any special interest in me! Probably I'm the one he's ashamed of, and that's why he wants us to stick so close to the house. Your case didn't have the notoriety mine did."

They heard the stumbling feet of Doctor Ligmore on the stairs. He came in, exhaling benignancy and the faint odors of antiseptics. His face was ruddy after his ride and his beard was fanned out breezily; his whole demeanor constituted an invitation to outdoors. Marston's general sense of restlessness became an acute desire to burst forth from the bondage of this hospitality. He was conscious that he was a little resentful.

"You look a mite bilious," said Doctor Ligmore. "We must arrange to have my boys outdoors more."

Rurbot broke in on Marston's stammering attempt to explain why he proposed to leave.

"He thinks it's going to bother you to help him. And I'm the same way, dear old friend. We're young. We can get along."

Doctor Ligmore sat down and stared from one to the other, real concern etched on his features.

"Would you hurt an old man's tenderest feelings?"

"Certainly not," asseverated Rurbot.

"I had no business maundering on to you two boys about my trials and disappointments. I was only unloading my mind, as an old man enjoys doing. I wasn't hinting that I couldn't help you—dear, dear, no! I was enjoying your company; I relished having your sympathy while I talked. I was forgetting that young men need something more than an old man's society."

"And I need something else—a swift kick!" blurted Marston. "I only ask you to remember where I've been for the last few years, Doctor Ligmore. Now let me do something to prove that I'm not ungrateful. Keep me down cellar after this and I'll not complain."

"You need a little charity—that's all," stated Doctor Ligmore—"a little charity, because your naturally good disposition hasn't settled back into harness yet. Neither of you two boys needs money charity. You'll make your way with a bit of boost—a little capital." He sighed and waggled his head. "I reckon it's because I haven't that capital at hand to lend—that's why I have been complaining of my condition. Just a little money would set you on your way. It's too bad that some other old men cannot look at things the way I do." Doctor Ligmore cocked his thumbs one against the other and stared at the rag carpet. "Too bad! Too bad!"

There followed a long silence.

"Within an hour I have seen—laid my eyes on thirty thousand dollars in cash, doing nobody any good—not even the man who owns it. It isn't drawing a cent of interest. It has been where I saw it for years and hasn't drawn any interest—has not done money's rightful work for anybody. And money can do so many things when it is coupled up with a young man's brains and muscle! It's wicked to keep money in prison. If only I were the old man who owns that money!"

He surveyed his attentive listeners regretfully.

"You would be out in the world, my boys, making that money do honest work for me. Even if I had that money in the bank I would take it out. I'd like to see you make it sweat; the sweat would be honest profit."

"Thirty thousand dollars!" repeated Rurbot. "And idle?"

"It is worse than idle—it is a bomb with a slow fuse. It is threatening the life of an old man."

The eyes of the two men whose minds had been scantily occupied for many months were boring him for an explanation.

"I really ought not to talk about it—every word passed abroad makes the danger all the worse for an old man. A physician should be as silent as a priest; but, having you here—so helpless—and seeing the money there—so powerful if one is so minded—has stirred my feelings, boys. I know you'll respect what I tell you.

"I have just come from Old Peter Copp's house. He called me in as I was passing and asked me to give him medicine. He's got an ache inside and thinks it's disease. It's hunger, and he's too mean to admit it and buy food. I charged him a dollar and he unlocked some padlocks, pulled on some chains and dragged a chest out from under his bed. He has been growing a little light in his head and childish these days—has starved himself too much. Senile dementia—desire to brag; men who have hung to a secret all their lives will open up first to a doctor. So he opened the chest and showed it to me—thirty thousand dollars in all kinds of greenbacks and scrip.

"He put his first dollar on the bottom of the chest, like a bee starting a comb, and has stored his money there, little by little, for years and years. Old bach—lives alone; has starved himself and drained his farm. The result of it all is that pile of paper in the chest—every bill smoothed with a warm flatiron before he laid it in; and all useless—useless as it lies there. He lives a mile from anybody in a house on a hill; and the world has gone past without noticing him or thinking about him, or realizing how much money an old man can save and pile into a chest when he sticks to the job."

Doctor Ligmore gazed down at the carpet as he talked and rolled his thumbs over and over each other. His tone was melancholy as he discoursed on the manners and morals of Peter Copp.

"He is eighty years old and has outlived all his relatives. He himself can't live much longer. When I found out I couldn't induce him to buy good food I gave him some medicine to dull his hunger. I may be hurrying him out of the world, but he may as well die comfortably."

"And where will his money go?"

"I'm afraid he'll grow sillier and brag of it, and show it to somebody who will gossip. And then thieves will come some night and murder him and take it away. Probably that's the way his money will go—or the state will take it after he is dead. He'll never make a will, he says."

"He might have it changed into hard money and take it with him," suggested Rurbot sullenly. "He could sit beside the fire Down There and count it with tongs if it got too hot for his hands."

"It's too bad—too bad!" mused the good Old Doc. "Money is such a blessing or such a curse!"

"You're right," agreed Marston. "You take a chap pawing over the rags behind a wicket in a bank and he has plenty of chance to see."

"You don't suppose, do you—now that he's getting feeble and childish—that there's any such thing as coaxing him to lend a bundle—at good interest?" suggested Rurbot.

Doctor Ligmore rose and plodded toward the door.

"I wish I could show you Peter Copp. I wish I could have you overhear Peter Copp's opinion of borrowers and banks. You wouldn't ask that question again. I'll have to say good-by, boys; a dozen more patients to visit before old Jerry gets his oats and the doctor gets his supper."

VII

RURBOT did not speak until the sound of the trudging hoofs had ticked into silence down the road.

"Keeping money away from its rightful use in that way is a crime against society, Marston. You don't have to be an anarchist to believe that."

"Well, it's his."

"The mere paper, with the pictures and the printing—yes; but he hasn't the moral right to enslave the power represented by those bits of paper. A man has the right to use all the air he can breathe; but he would be wrong if he tried to pen that air up away from other men."

If Doctor Ligmore, out of the kindness of his heart, had decided to be a bit garrulous so as to furnish a topic to relieve the ennui of his guests, he succeeded. Rurbot had a dreamer's extravagant theories in regard to the control of money; Marston steadied the anarchist's balloon with a banker's more sordid practicalities.

The two were still discussing the fine points when Doctor Ligmore came home. The discussion was continued late that evening in the little office, where the curtains were drawn. The Doctor sat by, a bland and reticent referee, rolling his thumbs.

However, theory, practicality and the mild opinion of the referee agreed on this—the mere fact that the money was in a chest under his bed comforted merely the selfish sense in Old Peter Copp. By having it always near him, adding to it, watching it, admiring it, he had developed the unfortunate instincts of the miser, and was slowly killing himself by starvation, because his mastering impulse was to add to the visible hoard. Were it not visible his perspective would be changed.

Marston drew attention to the fact that men who pay considerable amounts by check find the operation less painful to their sense of acquisitiveness than slapping down the real cash.

Rurbot felt that if Peter Copp's money were released for the use of society the old man would be no longer guilty of a crime and would, therefore, be in a better mental state, even though he did not have the astuteness to analyze the workings of his emotions.

Old Doctor Ligmore summed up the whole thing in terms of the physician and the considerate neighbor, friend of all.

"The poor old gaffer can't eat or sleep and doesn't realize what the trouble is. It may be a case for the selectmen. However, he's still keen and I should have to testify that he isn't insane; but a hearing would open up broadcast the story about that chest of money; then along would come the burglars after we let the old man go back to his house. There are no relatives to take him in hand; but think how comfortable his last days could be made

if that money were all safe and drawing interest to support him in a good boarding place!"

It was certain that the case of Peter Copp required some kind of treatment on that point banker, anarchist and physician agreed; but they went to bed that night without making any definite suggestion of a reasonable remedy.

VIII

THE question of what to do in the case of Peter Copp came up the next day, then the next day, and the next. It appeared to occupy all their waking thoughts. After a time the three men began to look at each other furtively as they talked and were plainly and mutually embarrassed when they caught each other in this scrutiny. There was a strange light in the eyes of Rurbot; Marston studied his finger nails a great deal while he talked; but the expression on the Doctor's face was not to be descried under the mask of his patriarchal beard, and the crinkly lids drooped low over the blue marbles of his eyeballs.

An eavesdropper might have said that two men were uncertainly sparring for an opening and that the benignant and sympathetic old man at one side, twirling his thumbs and gazing at the carpet, was spurring first one and then the other on to make the decisive break.

It may have been that none of the three did know at the time who made that break. Perhaps the man who said it did not realize that he had put it into words.

However, both guests were quite sure that Doctor Ligmore did not put the idea into words, for they found him protesting: it was a mild and gentle rebuke, as he might have talked to reckless children.

"I don't remember just how we happened to get so far into this thing as we are now," declared Rurbot; "but, seeing we are here, I'm going to come to the point: Old Copp might as well have a ring-tailed tiger tied under his bed, ready to hop out and eat him. He doesn't know enough to lend money to his own advantage. Why not make him lend it? It will break up his mania. It will change his manner of life. As you've said, Doctor, he can be put into a good boarding place and taken care of."

"I don't remember that I made it as a suggestion, sonny."

"Well, then, I make it. Marston and I can put that money into a good proposition and back it with our brains and efforts. He's a banker and I'm a worker. Old Copp will find six per cent interest slipped to him from an unknown source. In order to ease his mind and put him straight I'd advise our being liberal in the matter. If Marston agrees we can send word to Copp from said unknown source that the minute he settles in a good boarding place we'll fire along six months' interest, and will keep up the payments as long as he behaves himself and takes good care of his health. The deal will be the salvation of Old Peter Copp; a man with his disposition will do anything to get money—even to buying three square meals a day."

"My sakes! It—it sounds ——" gasped Doctor Ligmore.

"I know; but the three of us can view it from an angle where it looks right. Doc, you know that amputation is needed in some desperate cases. A patient is saved that way. Why not prescribe it in this case?"

"You suggest ——"

"Marston and I will walk into Peter Copp's house to-morrow night and borrow his capital."

"But there are two old fusees in racks over his bed, loaded with powder, lead and slugs, and double-B shot."

"What is the good of modern science if amputation can't be made painless? You are giving him medicine. Probably it's something to make him sleep. Well, make him sleep a little more soundly to-morrow night."

Doctor Ligmore split a startled stare between the two, and then he slid deep in his armchair and gazed at the ceiling.

"Oh, dear!" he murmured over and over, linking the phrase with purring little groans. "We have talked the thing pro and con so much that we have sort of smoothed the edges with sophistry, my boys," he mumbled. "I have allowed myself to be carried along by the argument. I can even take a liberal view of the proposition. But the bald truth is—as the law would look at it—you ask me, a family physician, to drug an old man so that you can enter his house in the nighttime and carry away his money."

"That's it looking at it from one angle; but it is admitted among us three that we take a broader view of the affair."

"I think I'll have to go to bed now. It has been a hard day. I'm tired. My judgment is a bit clouded," said the Doctor, struggling up from his chair. "It must be so, for I find myself sympathizing with—with your ambition."

"Then just say the word and help us out," pleaded Rurbot. He shot a glance at Marston, appealing to him to make a flank attack; but the ex-cashier continued to maintain his watchful silence.

"Don't press me while my judgment may be clouded, sonny. I will sleep on it; but"—he paused at the door and wagged his head encouragingly—"I may feel the same in the morning as I do to-night—and then I'll know my judgment is not clouded. It's an old man's caution—old man's wisdom, sonny."

"Why didn't you grab in when we had the Old Doc on the run?" demanded Rurbot, showing testiness for the first time in his intimacy with his friend. He began as soon as he had shut their attic door.

"I'm poor help when I'm not sure about a proposition," said Marston doggedly. "I'm sorry, in this case, that I'm not a little more of an anarchist; but I'm having horror of conscience about robbing that old man. You can see I haven't got up to your way of looking at it."

"You quit, then?"

"No; I'm still arguing with myself. I'm coming along slow but sure; but I've got a question to ask you! Why haven't you simplified this case? Why haven't you offered the Old Doc a one-third whack in this thing?"

"You're not trying to slur that old saint, are you?"

"I am not; but I'm talking business. Your statement needs a little straight business injected into it, Paul. I've been listening and watching and thinking, while you've been doing most of the talking. The Old Doc wants his."

"I'll be patient," growled Rurbot. "Unstrap!"

"He began to get in touch with you just before your time was up."

"Good friend! Perhaps you never had one."

"He met you in Boston—on the sly."

"All explained."

"Yes; but you explained it! He denied us before that Moran. He sneaked us here."

"All explained."

"Aha!" This with resignation. "All right, if it suits you. Then he puts up the Peter Copp matter."

"A little incident of his practice—to entertain us."

"He has succeeded. Now he is waiting for us to make our offer."

"I'll bet you five thousand dollars to one thousand I can prove that isn't so."

"Are you betting Old Peter's money?"

"I'll put the thing to him in the morning—you listen."

"What has he been crying poverty and hard luck for?" hedged Marston. "He hasn't dropped a single hint about a plan for helping us until this Peter Copp matter came up."

"But he has only just found out about the money."

"Paul, you're a good fellow; but I can understand now how you let that girl put it over you," said Marston. "Your imagination works while you sleep."

"We'd better go to sleep!" snapped Rurbot rather sharply. "Otherwise you and I may have trouble at a time when we can't afford to have it."

IX

DOCTOR LIGMORE trudged into their room before breakfast. It was plain that he had something on his mind, but he fumbled with commonplaces.

"You know what I told you!" whispered Marston to Rurbot; their heads were close together before the mirror, where they were brushing their hair.

"And you know what I told you!" whispered Rurbot. "You listen!"

He broke in on the Doctor's flounderings:

"I have been thinking that thirty thousand dollars is a good deal of money, Doctor. Marston and I can establish a good business with a lot less. Furthermore, it would be safer for Old Peter not to put all his eggs into one basket. As a special favor all round, in case the deal goes through, won't you take ten thousand dollars and handle it—invest it—make it earn something?"

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"No—no—no!" declared the Doctor with unction that was impressive and convincing. "That would look like conspiracy. Boys, I have come to you this morning to say that, in view of all the circumstances, I have concluded that the end in this case justifies the means. You have been punished—I believe you have come out into the world purged. You will be more honest hereafter than men who have not suffered; though it's hard for men in your position to get a new start. I'm going to help you; but remember—no matter what comes up—remember that you have the sole responsibility of the money."

He dwelt on this point when he saw them again that day—he was firm on it when they descended from his buggy at midnight at the foot of the lonely lane that led to the miser's house. And they proceeded to their work of securing a business loan from Peter Copp with more confidence than amateur burglars usually possess, for the Doctor assured them Peter Copp would surely be asleep.

They had been well drilled as to the ground plan of Peter Copp's bedroom and its approaches, and they knew just where the oak bar rested in its sockets across the back door. The Doctor furnished the bit and stock with which to bore that door.

It was ridiculously easy. They bored the worm-eaten old door, pried up the bar and entered.

They lighted their wax taper and found Peter Copp nested in the mess of tattered quilts he called his bed. They went to him boldly, assured by his snores, as mariners enter a harbor assured by the foghorn. The squalor of the cluttered room, the filth of his coverings, the ancient wretch himself, bones packed into a parchment skin the two invaders surveyed it all with disgust and exchanged glances. They agreed silently that Peter Copp was no kind of man to have money.

He did not stir when they cut the greasy cord that suspended his padlock keys from his wattled neck. Marston held the candle and Rurbot released one by one the chains that guyed the chest to the legs of the old four-poster. They dragged it out; it was small and not heavy. They lifted it by the handles and started for the door. Marston still held the candle, for there were only narrow, twisting lanes through the upheaval of old furniture, barrels and broken boxes.

Suddenly they stopped, turned and looked back; the reassuring stream of snores had been checked by a gasping snort.

Peter Copp was sitting up in bed!

The sedative which might have held him in a stupor while knife and saw separated from him a dry old leg had not availed when the affair was the amputation of his hoard. They were lugging away the core of his soul; he could have spared a leg.

His eyes in the shadows were like green fires. The farflung glow of the candle made the seamed and contorted face an arabesque study, which so fascinated Marston that he forgot caution; he was holding the candle high, and it shed its light on the faces of the two who had come a-borrowing.

For a few minutes the old man held his rigid attitude; the torpor clung to him. Then the tempest of his fears flicked the mists from his brain. He rolled out on the floor, his joints cracking. He saw that the chest was gone.

Marston dropped the candle and leaped with Rurbot when the latter dragged at his end of the chest. They tumbled through the doorway, with their burden between them. It was fortunate that they fell. A window above them seemed fairly to burst; every bit of sash, from sill to crownpiece, was carried away, and clinking glass sprinkled them. Slugs screamed and double-B shot tore through the foliage of a tree near by.

It was a blast from one of Peter Copp's fusees. They rose and ran, carrying the chest. When they were halfway to the main highway the second fusee rained its missiles at random. The borrowers rolled over the wayside stone wall.

Doctor Ligmore had not given them an explicit promise he would wait for them. He had been vague on that point, though he had definitely insisted he would have nothing to do with the money; but there was the dim loom of his buggy on the highway.

"Gracious! Gracious!" snapped his protesting voice. "You are making too much noise about this!"

They hurried to him with their burden.

"Throw it in behind!" he commanded sharply.

Rurbot started to ask a breathless question.

"I'll help you in a tight pinch—seeing you have bungled," broke in the Doctor. "I don't want the money—that's all! Throw it in!"

His face, with its banner of beard, was thrust outside the top-spreaders. His goggling marbles of eyes gleamed. Even in the gloom they were visible.

They hesitated. They held a fortune—it was in their hands. They were not questioning the Doctor's intentions. His previous insistence on the main point had convinced them; but the natural reluctance to let go when they held a good thing dominated the adventurers. They were in no condition of mind just then to reason on the matter.

"I say toss it in!" barked the Doctor. "You know what I told you."

They leaped to obey. If either had demurred the other would have hung back; but they acted together as though impelled galvanically. Doctor Ligmore, disavowing selfishness, had discounted disobedience.

They threw in the treasure. The next instant he slashed the quivering whip along the flank of his nag and away went the outfit, wheels clattering, hoofs pattering.

Marston and Rurbot ran behind for a few rods, shouting. Then they halted, listening, and made sure that Doctor Ligmore had abandoned them. All sounds of his retreat died away in the far distance.

They had heard the raucous shrieks of Peter Copp. He was supplementing the alarm already given by the tremendous explosions of his fusees; he was calling his neighbors to his aid.

"Well, what do you know about that?" panted Rurbot.

"I don't want to say just now—I'm saving my breath. We'd better see how soon we can get to your good Old Doc Ligmore's, preparing a line of questions on the way."

From the poll of the big hull they could gaze afar. Lanterns winked between striding legs to right and to left, and all about.

"There's no show for us on the roads," declared Marston; "and they'll corner us if we go cantering round the fields of this town like wild sheep. We're spoken for."

"Hide!" hissed Rurbot. "Here comes Old Peter."

They dodged over the stone wall and crouched behind it. Like a wailing specter, with limp and flapping arms and strident voice, Peter Copp staggered down the lane. He went into the highway, calling to his neighbors.

"You told me once that you had never read Voltaire," said Rurbot in his soft tones after a time. "Ever read Poe—the story of how the letter was hidden?"

"Good gad! This is a devil of a time to ask me about literature! No; I never read Poe."

"Reading makes a full man—and it also furnishes suggestions worth remembering. In ten minutes this whole town will be looking for us on roads and in the fields. So will other towns. The last place they will look for us will be in Peter Copp's house."

"Say, Rurbot, your idea of borrowing money from an old man who didn't want to lend it—did you get that out of a book too?"

"I'm going to hide in Peter Copp's house. You may do as you like," said Rurbot.

He hurried away, crouching low. The apple trees cast islands of shadow. Marston kept close at his heels. Propinquity comforted him, though the plan did not. Rurbot lighted matches, shielding them under the hood of his nested fingers, found the moldy cellar stairs, and they descended. Over ruck and truck of various sorts they clambered and found an asylum in a potato bin in a far corner.

x

AFTER a time feet came trampling into the house over their heads. From remarks the men made and from the manner of their unsteady tread it was evident they were bearing a burden.

"The old sir must have got a clipper of some kind," it was explained to a late arrival. "Found him this way in the middle of the road, where he'd fell and rooted his nose in the dirt. He's been knocked out by some kind of a tunk. Somebody better hitch up and hike for Doc Ligmore."

The feet of a volunteer went stubbing away.

"It's for you to give off orders, constable," suggested a voice.

"Two stay with Old Peter. Rest of us will take the warpath. The devils that done it haven't got much of a start. By the looks

of them chains they've lugged off what they came after."

For a long time the two in the bin heard only the mumbling voices of the watchers canvassing the situation, guessing at how much Peter Copp's treasure box held. Their most generous estimate was that he must have scratched together almost one thousand dollars.

"No wonder this thing was left to get so ripe it was rotten!" whispered Rurbot. "Even his neighbors didn't know."

At last there was a bustle above. Doctor Ligmore had arrived. The watchers greeted him eagerly.

"He's Old Reliable!" declared the man who had brought him. "Hardly stopped to dress—didn't stop to harness—came right along in my team."

"Too bad! Too bad!" clucked the good Old Doc. "Lift him over to the edge of the bed, boys. Careful! Careful!"

Silence for some minutes.

"Bones in both shoulders fractured," announced Doctor Ligmore.

"It's them dingblasted old fusees. We heard both of 'em go off. Charges prob'ly been rusted in for twenty years."

"Hold the lantern up here, boys. I must get these bones in place before the swelling is worse."

"There ain't enough meat on him to swell," vouched a watcher.

"Get firm hold on his head and feet—the pain will bring him to his senses," said the Doctor.

In a moment the wailings of Old Peter began again:

"What ye here for? Go get 'em! They've got my money. Leave me alone. Get my money—my good money! All packed down in my chest—my nice money. Smoothed and laid flat; and they'll crumple it and spend it. I don't want nothing done for me. Get my money! Run after 'em. My thirty thousand dollars!"

"Fussed-up Cephas, Doc Ligmore! Did you hear what he said? Thirty thousand!"

"Delirium undoubtedly," said the Doctor. "Bring that lantern closer."

"Thirty thousand—and I ironed 'em all flat."

"'Tain't sense or reason, Doc."

"Senile dementia! I have been called in by him a few times lately and have noticed it. Hold the lantern the other side! But he may have had some money—enough to attract vagrants."

"Something must have been chained under the bed—and it's gone."

"Too bad! Too bad! Probably all he had; but, of course, no such sum."

"Why, Doc, look at the way he has always lived! Of course not!"

The two fugitives, crouched below in the noisome darkness, whispered to each other as they listened. They heard the shuffling feet, the creaking of the bedcords under the writhings of Peter Copp, the frenzy of his shrill expostulations, his efforts to beat the truth into the heads of his helpful friends; and they also heard the bland and continued disbelief in these ravings. And after a long time, by the buzz and rumble of many voices, they knew that the rooms above were crowded with the neighbors of Peter Copp.

"And there don't none of you believe what I'm telling you!" he kept saying. His voice was no longer strident. He whined.

There was a period of hush, as though the crowd had taken counsel and had put somebody forward as spokesman. And who else should be spokesman but good Old Doctor Ligmore?

"Uncle Peter, it has been decided that you mustn't live here alone any longer. You must be taken care of by your friends."

"My money was my friend. It's gone and you won't catch ——"

"You need a doctor's care."

"I ain't got any money to pay a doctor's bills."

"You need a good home."

"I'll have to go to the poor farm."

"You'll not go to any poor farm, Uncle Peter. Now listen! Here, in the hearing of our good neighbors, I pledge myself to take you home with me. We'll have a good nurse and you'll be as happy as the day is long."

"If I had my money I wouldn't be a burden to nobody."

"There are other things in the world besides money," declared Doctor Ligmore indulgently. "Any one of these good neighbors would take you home; but I'm offering to do it because you need to be under a doctor's care. So it's settled. Somebody please bring a hayrack; and put in plenty of straw for Uncle Peter to lie on. You shall have the best room in my house. And this isn't charity; it is only neighborly kindness."

"Friends and neighbors," bawled a voice: "I suggest that we give three cheers for that good old saint—Doc Ligmore."

"Cheer!" hissed Marston in the gloom. "That's your cue."

"Uncle Peter is not coming back here," announced the Doctor in the first silence. "All get busy, men; find hammer and nails—tear some boards off the barn—board up the windows."

"I'm going up there and expose him!" panted Rurbot.

"I would," counseled Marston dryly. "Then it would be a toss-up whether you'd fetch up in the State Prison or the Asylum."

The sound of saws and the rattle of hammers made a din above, and Rurbot did not move.

"And you'd better consider me a little," advised Marston. "You've got me into this. Do you think I want ten years more of that cross-eyed old baboon in the Harness Shop?"

"I'll go to that old liar's house and drag him round until he divides."

"Will you? With that venerable gimlet propped up and ready to yell that you're the man he saw in his house? Remember, he got a good look at us. Your old saint has got a fine burglar alarm set on his premises now, friend Paul."

"Where's your fighting spirit? What's the matter with you?"

"I think," said Marston judicially, "that I'm stung—and know it."

"But we're wise to the robber! Are you going to let him get away with it?"

"He has got away with it."

"Even if I go back to prison for it, it's my duty to show him up. He's a thief—an old renegade—a bluff!"

"As a financier, I'm going to disagree with you. He simply has made a coup. You see, Rurbot, a great many old men, without relatives, give away their property to persons who make their last days happy. Good Old Doc Ligmore has merely discounted a debt of gratitude. Perfectly legitimate!"

"Oh, you ——" snarled Rurbot, and was unable to express his disgust.

"As legitimate as our attempt to secure a loan," declared Marston. "You see, as a banker, I'm taking a practical view."

After a while he broke the long silence: "When the house is boarded up and abandoned, we can hang round in here, eating raw potatoes, until it's safe to walk out—to-morrow night, say! The job will be laid to yeggs—and we do not look like yeggs."

A longer period of oppressive silence.

"This rather reminds me of our first meeting—except that the doghole was a cleaner place. Time is hanging a little heavy. Have you got any more stories of that Voltaire cynicism sort? They might cheer me up."

"No!" snapped Rurbot. "I'm on to you and your sneers!"

"Very well. I'll take a nap."

Men carrying a burden scuffed their feet above them and a heavy cart rumbled off. The pattering hammers were still. A voice announced that all the windows were boarded. A door slammed, sending echoes through the rooms of the old house. A key rasped. The man who locked the door was evidently the file closer of the ranks of the departing neighbors.

"I want to say again, friends," he declared, his voice trailing into indistinctness as he hurried away, "that Old Doc Ligmore is a saint! It isn't everybody who'd want Old Peter Copp in the house; but the Doc spoke right up, and ——"

Then, except for the fiddling of crickets in the dry grass that fringed the sagging underpinning, utter silence settled about the ancient kennel on the hill. The master had followed the money.

Are Burglars and Brutes Afraid of Your Home?

A BURGLAR or Brute has no more fear of a gun in the hands of the average man or woman than he has of a dark night.

Why? Because the average person with the average pistol can't hit the side of a barn.

But every Burglar and every Brute knows the danger of getting in front of a Savage Automatic—

Knows also that the Savage shoots 10 lightning shots instead of 6 or 8 in other automatics—

Knows, too, that a house armed with a Savage is a house to keep away from.

But remember that the Savage aims easy as pointing your finger; is the one automatic that has 10 lightning shots instead of 6 or 8. It is the one automatic that is as harmless as a kitten around the house, because it tells by a touch or look whether loaded or empty. It makes Burglars and Brutes afraid of your home. So don't let the dealer talk you into some other make.

A Brand New Savage Rifle

This .22 Tubular Repeater has all the original Savage features—hammerless trombone action, solid breech, solid top, side ejection, etc. Price $12.00. Send for circular.

SAVAGE ARMS COMPANY, 712 SAVAGE AVENUE, UTICA, N. Y.

THE (10 Shots Quick) SAVAGE AUTOMATIC

The Largest Club in America

Comparatively few people know that the largest club in America is composed exclusively of girls. There are no dues and no entrance fee, and the only qualification for membership is a desire to make money.

In the eleven years of its existence its members have earned almost three quarters of a million dollars through their membership alone. This year they earned $90,000. Most of these girls never earned a cent until they joined the club, the doings of which are chronicled each month in a department devoted to its interests in *The Ladies' Home Journal.*

And now, at the commencement of its twelfth year of existence, the scope of the organization has been enlarged so that every member may earn a regular monthly salary. Membership is open to any girl who wants to earn money. As many as have that desire will be included. Any girl may learn about the organization and its benefits by addressing

THE GIRLS' CLUB
The Ladies' Home Journal, Philadelphia, Pa.

A Story of Public Service

SOME people believe that advertising merely takes business away from one man and hands it to his competitor. They think that if everybody stopped advertising, business would go on just the same, and things would be cheaper.

It sounds plausible. But it is not true.

Advertising is, of course, much used as a competitive weapon, and a very powerful one. Any method of selling—advertising, show windows, clerks, traveling men—gets business that without the selling effort would have gone to some other firm. Most of us believe that competition is a good thing. It keeps down prices. It keeps up quality. It makes business men more eager to give the public good service. Any economical method of competition ought therefore to be regarded as of benefit to the public. And the economy of advertising purely as a competitive method has been so clearly demonstrated in many great industries over a period of years that it need not be discussed here.

The main question, however, is: What does advertising do besides stimulate competition?

As a matter of fact, its chief use lies entirely beyond. It creates new markets, new demand, new desires. It makes possible new products, new ways of doing things, a better national life.

The Story

In one of our large cities, a few years ago, fifty-one per cent of the stock of the local gas and electric company was acquired by a national public-service organization. The way the new management went about its job sent thrills of apprehension through the minority stockholders, who were local citizens. The dividends paid the year before had amounted to $14,000. Immediately the new board cut the price of both gas and electricity. Figures showed that, with the same consumption as the year before, the total dividends at the new rates would be only $4000.

But there lay the difference: The consumption was not going to be the same. The company began a strong campaign of advertising. To the local stockholders this seemed ruinous folly. They reasoned, "Have we not a complete monopoly? We control exclusive franchises on both gas and electricity. Why in the world should we spend money to advertise when we have 'em both coming and going?"

No Competition

If ever a case existed where advertising solely for competitive purposes would have been absolutely futile, this was it. The company certainly had the city both coming and going. But the answer was, "We are not going to *spend* money in advertising. We are going to *invest* money in advertising."

Half pages began to appear in the newspapers. In the course of a year the gas and electric company used more space than any of the department stores, which, of course, had been up to that time the heaviest advertisers in the city.

Cooking schools to show women the merits of the gas range were installed—and advertised. Men who had never thought of the saving of labor and expense possible by using small electric motors in their shops found out—through advertising. Local merchants were shown the increased trade that they could get by having their stores better lighted. Electric signs were popularized.

What Happened?

The first year the advertising sold seven carloads of gas stoves. It sold coke at a fair price, instead of at a loss as before. It sold gas heaters, irons, fixtures and novelties. It put in 124 new electric motors for small power users. It put up electric signs and ornamental lighting effects.

In these ways, as well as through the stimulation of ordinary consumption, it very greatly increased the use of gas and electric current.

At the end of the year the total dividends, which estimates had said were going down to $4000, were $44,000. At the end of the second year of the same policy the aggregate dividends were $76,000. And this with all bills for advertising paid. And with the public buying its gas and electricity far cheaper than it ever had before.

But, apart from better dividends and lower price to the consumer, what did the advertising do for that city?

What Was the Effect?

It gave the city better-lighted stores and streets. It put labor-saving devices into hundreds of homes. It cut the cost of operation for scores of small, struggling manufacturers. It showed people how to get and use things that made their lives cleaner and easier. It made, in short, a more comfortable, more alert and prosperous community.

What local advertising did in that city, national advertising is doing all the time for the nation. We pick up a number of *The Saturday Evening Post* and, seeing the advertising of 17 makers of men's clothing, we think, "Here are all these manufacturers just advertising against one another." We forget that advertising of ready-made clothing has made this a better-dressed nation, that it has showed hundreds of thousands of men the way to cheaper and better-fitting clothes, that it is always effectively preaching the gospel of the importance of looking well.

Creating Human Activity

Advertising is like the railroad, the trolley, the telephone, the newspaper, the school—a creator of human activity. Like all of these, it is a force for the wider and quicker dissemination of information. It brings within our ken things that we never knew existed, or never thought we wanted. It teaches us to want things a little beyond our grasp and to work a little harder in order to get them. It is like the rifle that the modern Tom Sawyer saw in the window. He had intended to loaf all summer, but he wanted that rifle. In order to get it he had to have money. To get money he went out and painted fences and ran errands and mowed lawns. The knowledge that there was a rifle that he could have if he worked for it made him a producer instead of a dependent.

True Public Service

If we believe in a constantly advancing civilization, if we believe that people ought to keep on trying to live a little better and have a little more comfort, a little more convenience and a little more ambition—if our philosophy includes these tenets, then we must believe that whatever shows people the way and rouses their ambition to possess—and to *produce* in order to possess—is a public service. It is upon that basis that we declare advertising to be, not primarily a weapon of competition, but primarily a means of constructive public service.

THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY, Independence Square, Philadelphia

For Sherbets, Sundaes, Punch, Jellies

Unfermented, Unsweetened, Undiluted Juice of Fresh Concords

Nature's Christmas Present

The drink that always pleases, always satisfies. Healthful as well as Delicious. It takes the place of fruit in our daily menu and is a wholesome beverage for every meal. Order a case today.

Armour's GRAPE JUICE

The Grape Juice with the Natural Flavor

If your dealer cannot supply you we will send you
a dozen trial pints for $3.00, or quarts for $5.50

ARMOUR & COMPANY Dept. A-55, Chicago

Armour's Grape Juice Factory at Westfield, New York

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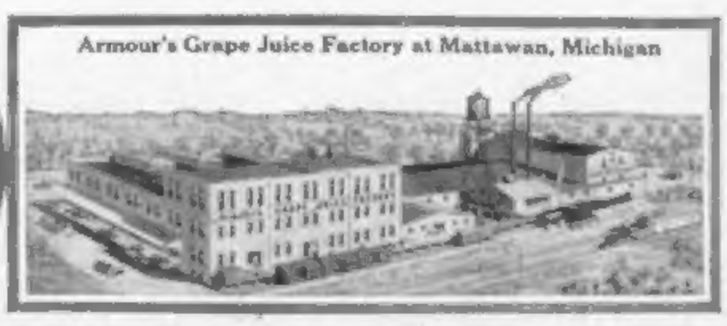

Bottled Where the Best Grapes Grow

"A 'White' Christmas
and
A Clean New Year"

Yours "Old Dutch"